CITY HILIGHTS

The Truth Speaks

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P12 Wayne Madsen named Italy T20 World captain

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Gruhalakshmi scheme row: Ashoka alleges women were cheated

BELAGAVI

After the Congress-led Karnataka government admitted in the Legislative Assembly that there was a lapse in disbursing Gruhalakshmi scheme installments, Leader of the Opposition R. Ashoka alleged that nearly ₹5,000 crore would have gone undetected had the BJP not raised the issue.

Speaking to reporters after staging a walkout from the Assembly, Ashoka questioned Women and Child Welfare Minister Laxmi Hebbalkar, asking why women beneficiaries were "cheated." He said people of the state, especially the poor, were waiting for Gruha Laxmi payments and ration supplies, but the government had disappointed them.

Ashoka demanded immediate crediting of the pending amounts to beneficiaries' accounts. He alleged that funds were not released to 10 districts and claimed officials at district offices were threatened and instructed not to share information. Accusing the government of attempting to "swallow" ₹5,000 crore, he asked whether it was a "government of loot."

The poor wait for the Gruha Laxmi money and for their ration. But the government has poured cold water on their hopes.
—R Ashoka, Oppn Leader

Hebbalkar admits two months' Gruhalakshmi payments pending

BELAGAVI: Women and Child Development Minister Lakshmi Hebbalkar on Wednesday acknowledged that payments under the Gruhalakshmi scheme are pending for two months and expressed regret that her earlier statement in the Assembly was incorrect. She said a review revealed that two months' assistance remains unpaid in the 2024–25 financial year. Hebbalkar assured the House that the reasons for the delay would be examined and corrected soon. If her statement had caused confusion, she said, she sincerely regretted it.

LS passes SHANTI Bill amid Oppn walk out

Union minister Jitendra Singh termed the SHANTI Bill a "milestone legislation" that will give a new direction to the country's developmental journey in atomic energy

NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha on Wednesday approved the "Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill, 2025" during the Winter Session, amid an opposition walkout. Introduced by MoS for the Department of Atomic Energy Jitendra Singh on Monday, the amended bill marks a significant policy shift by permitting private sector participation in India's nuclear industry, previously reserved for government enterprises.

The Opposition contended that the Bill diluted provisions of the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010 that passed on the liability for a nuclear incident on to the suppliers of nuclear equipment.

Singh highlighted that the legislation establishes a pragmatic civil liability regime for nuclear damage and grants statutory status to the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board. The law aims to boost nuclear energy production and its applications across sectors, supporting India's goal of achieving 100 GW of nuclear power capacity by 2047. The bill introduces updated regulatory provisions, including enhanced safety protocols, a specialised nuclear tribunal for dispute resolution, and modifications to the nuclear liability framework to reduce risks and encourage investment.

Under the legislation, private companies and joint ventures can seek authorisation to establish and operate nuclear facilities and transport nuclear fuel. However, critical operations such as uranium enrichment, spent fuel management, and heavy water production will remain under central government control. The government will continue overseeing radioactive materials and radiation-producing equipment to ensure strict safety compliance.

RS approves 100% FDI in insurance sector

NEW DELHI: The Rajya Sabha on Wednesday passed the Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha (Amendment of Insurance Laws) Bill, 2025, raising the foreign direct investment (FDI) limit in the insurance sector from 74% to 100%. The reform aims to expand insurance coverage to all citizens by 2047, attract greater global investment, and facilitate mergers between insurance and non-insurance companies.

MGNREGA name change: CM, DCM lead protests

BELAGAVI

The ruling Congress in Karnataka on Wednesday staged a protest against the Centre's move to replace the existing rural employment law MGNREGA, challenging the BJP to remove the picture of Mahatma Gandhi from currency notes as well. The agitation led by chief minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy D K Shivakumar in front of the Gandhi statue at Suvarna Vidhana Soudha also protested the alleged "hate politics" against the party leadership in the National Herald case.

Siddaramaiah accused BJP of engaging in renaming exercises instead of focusing on work to benefit the poor. Meanwhile, Shivakumar challenged the BJP to change Mahatma Gandhi's photo on the rupee note. "Replacing MGNREGA is a national problem. We have got MGNREGA through constitution. It is a Constitution amendment. You can't change a constitution amendment. If BJP has guts let it change Gandhi's photo in the Rupee note. Let us see. We will take up the issue in the assembly," he told reporters.

Return '51 cartons of Nehru papers': Centre attacks Sonia Gandhi

NEW DELHI: The Centre on Wednesday renewed its demand for the return of 51 cartons of Jawaharlal Nehru's papers taken from the Prime Ministers' Museum and Library (PMML) in 2008, asserting that such records belong in public archives and not in private custody. Union Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat clarified that the papers are not "missing," as their transfer to Congress leader Sonia Gandhi was formally recorded and their location is known. Shekhawat said the documents form part of India's national documentary heritage and must be accessible to scholars, citizens and Parliament for an objective understanding of Nehruvian history. He questioned why the papers have not been returned despite repeated reminders from PMML.

More on page 7

Sri Siddaramaiah
Hon'ble Chief Minister

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA

URBAN DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
DIRECTORATE OF MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION

Sri D.K. Shivakumar
Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister

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Government of Karnataka

Tushar Girinath, IAS
Additional chief secretary
Urban development department
Government of Karnataka

Deepa Cholan, IAS
Secretary
Urban Development Department
Government of Karnataka

Prabhuling Kavalikatti, IAS
Director, Directorate of Municipal Administration
Urban Development Department
Government of Karnataka

Protecting public property and refraining from violence A constitutional fundamental duty of every Indian

Grand Celebration of Vijay Diwas celebrated at St Philomena's College

MYSORE

St. Philomena's College (Autonomous), Bannimantap, Mysore, commemorated Vijay Diwas (1971) in a grand and solemn ceremony today, marking India's decisive victory in the Indo-Pak War and the liberation of Bangladesh.

The celebration was a collaborative effort, meticulously organized by the 3 Kar Naval and 16 Kar Battalion - NCC Units, the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), and the Institution's Innovation Council.

The event, which commenced at 12:30 pm beside the PG Block, served as a powerful reminder of the valor, sacrifice, and indomitable spirit of the Indian Armed Forces. The highlight of the ceremony was the inauguration and solemn wreath-laying at the newly erected War Memorial, a tribute conceived and executed jointly by the IQAC and the NCC units of the college.

Rev. Dr. Lourdu Prasad Joseph, Rector and President of the ceremony, led the tributes by placing the first wreath at the memorial, honoring the memory of the brave martyrs. This was followed by floral tributes offered by other dignitaries and functionaries present, symbolizing the institution's profound respect and gratitude for the defenders of the nation.

The event was graced by the esteemed presence of the college leadership and key functionaries: Rev. Fr. Gnana Pragasam, Campus Administrator, Rev. Fr. David Sagarayaj S., Assistant to the Rector, Dr. Ravi J.D. Saldanha, Principal, Ronald Prakash Cutinha, Vice Principal, Dr. Noor Mubasher C. A., PG Coordinator, Dr. Reena Francis, Controller of Examinations, Anand C., Dean of Academic Affairs, Lydia Anjali, UUCMS Coordinator.

The organization was supported by the NCC and IQAC Coordinators:

NCC Officers: Sub Lt. Eliezer Vishwas (ANO, 3 Kar Naval Unit- NCC) and Francis Devasahayam (CTO, 16 Kar Battalion - NCC) IQAC Team: Mr. A. Thomas Gunaseelan (IQAC - Coordinator) and Dr. Deepa V (IQAC - Co-Coordinator).

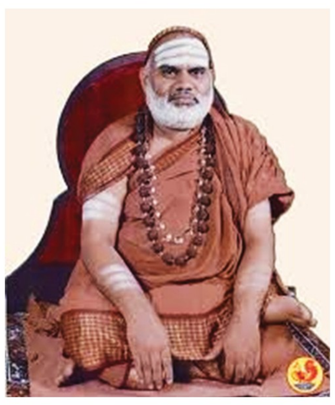
The celebrations underscored the college's commitment to instilling values of patriotism, discipline, and national service among its students.

'Stutha Shankara' in Palace premises in Mysuru on Dec 20

MYSURU

On the auspicious occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Sannyasa Diksha of Jagadguru Shankaracharya Sri Bharati Tirtha Mahaswamiji of the Dakshinamnaya Sri Sharada Peetham, Sringeri, who is the Chief Patron of Vedanta Bharati Institution, a grand spiritual initiative titled "Suvarna Bharati" is being organized in Mysuru District.

As part of this initiative, the "Kalyanavrishti Mahabhiyana – Stotra Mahasamarpana" program will be held on Dec 20, from 4:00 PM onwards, at the Mysuru Palace premises, under the name "Stuta Shankara."



This sacred program will be conducted in the divine presence of Jagadguru Shankaracharya Sri Vidhushekhara Bharati Sannidhanam of Sringeri. On this occasion, Paramapujya Sri Shankara Bharati Mahaswamiji, the Peetadhipati of Yadatore Sri Yoganandeshwara Saraswati Math, Krishnarajanagar, along with his spiritual successor Paramapujya Sri Brahmananda Bharati Swamiji, will grace the event with their divine presence.

The Rajamata, Pramoda Devi Wadiyar, and Mysuru-Kodagu MP Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar, have extended special care and cooperation in organizing this program and will personally participate in the event. The program will be held in the expansive forecourt in front of the world-famous Mysuru Palace during the evening hours, where the palace illumination arrangements will add exceptional grandeur to the occasion.

Over the past one year, lakhs of devotees across the district—including women, elders, and students—have practiced the sacred hymns composed by Sri Shankaracharya, namely the Kalyanavrishti Stava, Shiva Panchakshara Nakshatramala Stotra, and Lakshmi Narasimha Karunarasa Stotra. Thousands upon thousands of devotees will participate in this grand collective offering of hymns.

Arrangements have been made for floor mats and chairs for the chanting participants. Identity cards have been issued to registered participants, and transport facilities have been arranged for their arrival. For those attending the program as listeners, no identity card is mandatory, and there is no entry fee.

2nd anniversary of Sri Guru Ganayogi Swara Sangeetha Vidyalaya on December 21

MYSURU

The second annual anniversary and music worship programme of Sri Guru Ganayogi Swara Sangeetha Vidyalaya, Mysuru, will be held on December 21, continuously from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm, at the Rotary West Hall, near Kamakshi Hospital, Saraswathipuram in Mysuru.

The inaugural function will be held under the chairmanship of G. S. Jayadev, Secretary of Deenabandhu Trust, Chamarajanagar. The chief guests for the occasion will be Vidwan Mysuru N. Srinath, a renowned Karnataka classical vocalist; Umesh, Chairman of the Cultural Committee of the Builders' Association; and theatre artist and founder of the Mysuru Mime Team, Mime Gautham. On this occasion, students of Sri Guru Ganayogi Swara Sangeetha Vidyalaya, Mysuru and Hunsur, along with students of the Deenabandhu Ashram, will present Hindustani vocal performances, vachanas, and classical music.

Special guest performances will be given by Pandit Shivanand Herur, Hanumanth Kumar Belagal, and H. Rekha Belagal. They will be accompanied on harmonium by Channayya Aralagundagi of Kalaburagi and Guru Prabhurao of Sri Guru Ganayogi Swara Sangeetha Vidyalaya, Mysuru; on flute by R. Balasubrahmanya, a disciple of Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia; on tabla by Pandit Ramesh Dhannur, Santosh Kodli of Bengaluru, and Bheemashankar Hemanur; on keyboard by Indrakumar; and on rhythm pad by G. Suresh.

Prabhurao, President of Sri Guru Ganayogi Swara Sangeetha Vidyalaya, has appealed to music lovers to attend the programme. For further details, please contact 98803 69141.

26th annual Pooja mahotsava at Ayyappa Swamy Temple in Mysuru

MYSURU

Under the aegis of the Sabarimala Sri Ayyappa Pooja Committee, the 65th Annual Pooja Mahotsava and 26th Annual Dhwajarohana Mahotsava, along with related religious rituals, are being organized at the Sri Ayyappa Swamy and Guruvayurappan Temple, located at the foothills of Chamundi Hill, Mysuru. On the occasion of the Mandala Pooja, various auspicious religious programs are being conducted in the temple premises from December 17, 2025 to January 19, 2026. The details of the programs are as follows: Daily Annadana (Free Meals): From December 17, 2025 to January 19, 2026, every day from 12:30 pm to 2:30 pm. Maha Annadana:

From Saturday, December 20, 2025 to Wednesday, December 24, 2025, from 12:30 pm to 3:00 pm. 65th Annual Pooja Mahotsava: On December 20. 26th Dhwajarohana Mahotsava on December 21.

For devotees planning to undertake the Sabarimala pilgrimage, facilities for wearing the sacred mala, preparing the Irumudi, and availability of all required materials for the Irumudi are provided within the temple premises. Devotees can come to the temple, complete their ritual bath and other observances, and have darshan of the deity.

In addition, arrangements have been made, with the cooperation of devotees, for those observing the mala to stay overnight within the temple premises. On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Sabarimala Sri Ayyappa Pooja Committee, the Secretary has appealed to all devotees through this press release to actively participate in the Annual Mahotsava and all related pooja programs.

Special Campaign for the Nation – Mediation

MYSURU

As per the directions of the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), New Delhi, and Karnataka State Legal Services Authority, Bengaluru, a statewide program titled "Special Campaign for the Nation – Mediation: 90-Day Campaign" has been organized from January 2, 2026, for a period of 90 days.

This campaign will be conducted across all Taluk Courts and District Courts in the state to resolve pending cases through mediation. This initiative provides a golden opportunity for the public to obtain speedy relief in cases pending before courts. Under the "Special Campaign for the Nation – Mediation: 90-Day Campaign," the following types of cases can be settled through compromise: Compoundable criminal cases,

Motor Accident Claims Tribunal (MACT) cases, Bank recovery cases, Labour disputes,

Claims related to wages of industrial workers, Land acquisition cases, Cheque dishonour cases, Compoundable civil and other cases, Matrimonial / Family Court cases (excluding divorce cases). In such matters, both parties will be guided appropriately to arrive at a mutually agreeable settlement.

As the cases are resolved with the consent of both parties, relationships are preserved while disputes are amicably settled. Compromise will be effected only if both parties agree to the solution suggested by the mediator. This campaign offers a special opportunity for quick resolution at minimal cost.

For further information, the public may contact the District Legal Services Authority, Mysuru (applicable only to Mysuru City) at the Toll-Free Number: 15100, or directly approach the Taluk Legal Services Committees concerned, according to a press release by the Member Secretary of the District Legal Services Authority.

Newspaper distributor gets PhD Degree

MYSURU

Newspaper distributor Shivaprasad B. S. has earned a PhD degree by conducting research under the guidance of Dr. Gurudatta A. S. The doctoral thesis, prepared in English and titled "Customer Perception of Green Banking Products – A Comparative Study of Public and Private Banks in Bengaluru Districts," has been accepted for the award of a PhD in Commerce, in accordance with the 2017 regulations of the University of Mysore. This was announced in a press release by Prof. N. Nagaraj, Registrar (Evaluation), University of Mysore.

Congratulated

K. Shambuling, State President, Karnataka State Press Distributors Federation has congratulated Shivaprasad for achieving this rare feat on behalf of all press distributors across the state.

Coconut vendor dies in mishap

HUNSUR

In a tragic accident near Mookanahalli lake on NH-275, Hunsur, a goods auto overturned into the lake after being hit from behind by an unknown vehicle, killing a tender coconut vendor. The deceased, Raju (47), son of Prakash from Uddur village, was traveling from Hunsur to his native village. The collision occurred on the Hunsur outer ring road, causing the auto to topple into the lake. City Police Circle Inspector Santosh Kashyap, PSI Jameer Ahmed, and other officers, with the Fire and Emergency Services, retrieved the vehicle and Raju's body, which was taken to Hunsur Government Hospital mortuary. A case has been registered.

Agastya Credit Co-operative Society's new calender released

MYSURU

The 2026 calendar of Agastya Credit Co-operative Society, located in Krishnamurthypuram, was released at the Office of the Registrar of Co-operative Societies by Senior Inspector Raju B, who extended his best wishes on the occasion. The event was attended by the Society's President M.D. Gopinath, Vice-President M.N. Soumya, Treasurer K. Nagaraj, and members of the Board of Directors C.V. Parthasarathy, H.S. Prashanth Tatachar (Kanna), H.P. Chethan, N. Paniraj, Vikram Iyengar, N. Nagashree, K.N. Arun, Shivarudrappa, and S. Rajamma. In-charge Secretary N. Veena and staff members were also present.

FRT Training Program

MYSURU

At the Regional Health and Family Welfare Training Centre, Metagalli, Mysuru, a skill-based First Responder Training (FRT) program has been conducted continuously since July 2025 under the leadership of Principal Dr. Asha S.

The training is being provided by state-level expert trainers to personnel of all cadres from the Department of Health and Family Welfare across four districts—Mysuru, Chamarajanagar, Mandya, and Kodagu. The participants include ASHA workers, KSRTC employees, government nursing school students, railway staff, and ESI hospital staff.

This training program, designed with the objective of saving lives during emergency situations, provided participants with hands-on practical training in scientifically managing various medical conditions. Priority-based management was explained for cardiac emergencies, including providing psychological reassurance and performing Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). Participants were also trained in handling bleeding, fractures, injury management during accidents, and safe transportation of injured persons to hospitals.

Awareness was created on providing appropriate first aid during medical emergencies such as stroke, epilepsy, snake bite, dog bite, choking, fire accidents, poisoning, and collapse due to illness. The importance of the "Golden Hour" during accidents was emphasized, and participants were encouraged to act as responsible and compassionate citizens, upholding humanitarian values while serving as first responders to save lives.

Information was also provided on the legal protections available to individuals who render help, highlighting that this training program is beneficial at the individual, social, and family levels. The training program was attended by Principal Dr. Asha S. and trainers Shivashankar N.R., Arun Kumar S.R., Divyasingh, Sharath S., and Kruthi K.

Progressive thinkers to hold protest in Mysuru on Dec 27

MYSURU

A meeting of progressive thinkers and farmers was held here to discuss the framework of an agitation to be organised in Mysuru. The meeting was convened by the Federation of Progressive Organisations in association with Farmers' Organisations, under the leadership of Coordinator T. Gururaj.

The meeting decided that on Dec 27, from 10:00 am onwards, about 300 people will stage a protest at Chikka Gadiyara Circle. The meeting was attended by Odanadi Stanley, Kempugowda, Savitha P. Mallesh, Manju Kiran, Hoskote Basavaraj, Prof. Kalachannegowda, Chetan, Balakrishna, Sabihabhoomi Gowda, and others.

They opposed the bilateral agreements between India and the United States, which the Central Government is set to pursue in the month of January. Agreements are being signed to allow maize, sugarcane, cotton, pulses, chicken, etc. to come under FDA-related imports. Policies have been formulated to import dairy products from foreign countries. The Central Government claims that foreign milk contains a higher amount of protein. However, the rural economy is fundamentally dependent on dairy farming.

Farmers' organisations do not oppose the import of food items that are not grown in India. However, they strongly oppose allowing the import of commodities that are grown abundantly by Indian farmers. Overall, it was expressed that the situation is being created where, in the coming days, Indians will be forced to act according to the dictates of foreign companies.

PALACE FLOWER SHOW – 2025

A Grand Floral Spectacle at the World-Famous Mysore Palace

Arrangements are in full swing for the famous Mysore Palace Flower Show which will begin from December 21 and conclude on December 31. A ten-day flower show will be a feast for the eyes to see the varieties of flowers in one premises.

MYSURU

Mysore Palace Board has announced the Palace Flower Show – 2025, a magnificent ten-day floral extravaganza that will captivate tourists, flower lovers, families, and culture enthusiasts alike. It will be held from December 21 to 31 at Mysuru Palace premises. It will be inaugurated on December 21 at 4 pm.

Free Entry: 10.00 AM to 9.00 PM for the general public and tourists.

A BLOSSOMING WONDERLAND

Over 4 Lakh Flowers & 25,000 Ornamental Plants

This year's flower show showcases over 25,000 ornamental flower pots comprising 35 varieties, including Marigold, Dahlia, Petunia, Chrysanthemum, Coleus, Zinnia, Sunflower, Pansy, Nasturtium, Bonsai plants and many more.

Adding to the splendour are around 4 lakh cut flowers, including Roses, Carnations, Gerbera, Anthurium, Orchids, Blue Daisy, Ping Pong flowers and premium Ooty cut flowers from Tamil Nadu.

FLORAL MASTERPIECES & ICONIC DISPLAYS

A majestic floral model of the Sringeri Temple measuring 50 ft width × 16 ft length × 25 ft height will be created. Besides, the floral portraits of Late Salumarada Thimmakka (decorated with flowers and siridhanya), Maharaja Mummadi Krishna Raja Wodeyar at the Palace Board Office, Indian Constitution Motto artistically created as a floral book, Flower arches at two entrances & two floral peacocks and Fruit & vegetable carvings depicting famous personalities and animals will be created

There will be a floral depiction of Lord Krishna and Radha on a swing. Apart from this, floral tribute to Indian Women Cricketers' 2025 Trophy will be given. Floral models of war tanker, ship & Navy fighter jet from Operation Sindoor – 2025 will be created

Creative floral themes include: Chhota Bheem style art, Kalinga Mardhana pattern, Squirrel riding a bicycle, Swan-shaped floral points, Mango pattern décor and Masha & Bear theme

Special children attractions: storks, birds, ladybug, rabbits, smiling faces and a 15-metre worm-shaped design.

MUSIC, CULTURE & VISUAL DELIGHTS

Classical Instrumental Music featuring compositions of Sri Jayachamaraja Wadiyar will enhance the viewing experience.

There will be a Photo & Video Exhibition on Mysore Dasara – Then & Now, Wadiyar rulers

And Rare archival visuals & documentaries

GRAND PUPPET SHOWS

Five renowned women puppet artists will perform classic themes across five palace blocks, delighting tourists and families.

Geeta Srihari- Har Har Mahadev, Meenakshi Sri Shailakumar-Sampurna Ramayana, Hemalatha Kumaraswamy-Shivakeshavamrutha, Annapurna Gopalakrishna- Devanobba- Naama Halavu and Sarvamangala Krishna Bhat-Tirupati-Srinivasa Vaibhava.

PALACE ILLUMINATION: 7.00 PM TO 9.00 PM DAILY

Cultural Programs:
Dec 21 to 25, daily from 5.00 PM – 9.30 PM
On December 31, Karnataka and English Police Band from 11 pm to 12 am.

This is followed by Silent Green Fireworks: 12.00 AM – 12.15 AM to welcome the New Year

As special gesture: The medicinal plants (Aloe Vera, Tulasi, Jasmine, Betel leaf & Chakramuni) will be distributed to the first 500 visitors.

PHOTOS: Hampa Nagaraj

Revive the historic Doddakere, restore Mysuru's soul:Vedike

Call to Refill the Historic Tank Opposite Mysore Palace Grows Louder

MYSURU

A strong and emotional demand has been raised to revive Doddakere, the historic water body situated right opposite the iconic Mysore Palace, once a lifeline for the city's residents.

Premkumar, noted social activist and head of Mysuru Rakshana Vedike urged the State Government and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to take decisive steps to restore the tank and bring back its lost glory.

Doddakere, a naturally formed water body, existed for several decades and served as a crucial source of drinking water for the people of Mysuru. Around 150 years ago, the tank dried up due to prolonged failure of rains. Over the years, instead of being revived, it was gradually converted into an exhibition ground, erasing a significant part of the city's ecological and cultural heritage.

Premkumar stressed that the need of the hour is revival, not neglect. He pointed out that the natural elevation of the land makes Doddakere ideal for rejuvenation even today. During the monsoon, rainwater flowing down from Chamundi Hill can naturally refill the tank, making it a sustainable water body once again. "Nature has already designed the system; all that is needed is political will," he said.

Appealing directly to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who hails from Mysuru, Premkumar said restoring Doddakere would be a historic contribution. "If Siddaramaiah takes the initiative to refill this tank, his name will be remembered forever in the history of Mysuru," he remarked. He urged the government to pay compensation, take the land into its custody, and restore the tank in the larger public interest.

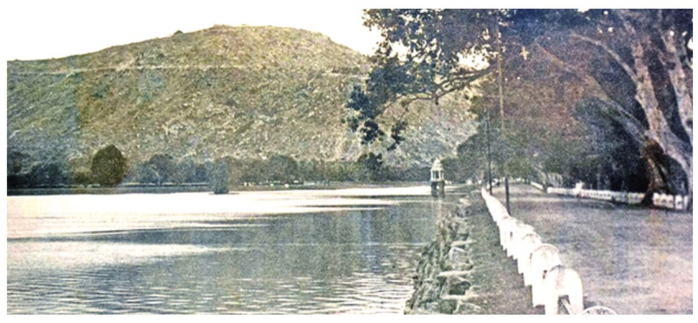
He also came down heavily on the district administration, accusing it of ignorance in handling sensitive land issues around the palace. He alleged that the Deputy Commissioner failed to acknowledge a long-pending legal dispute between the Mysore royal family and the state government over ownership of land in front of the palace. Despite this, the administration reportedly gave a green signal to transfer the land to the Government of India for the Unity Mall project.

"As a result of this negligence, Pramodadevi Wadiyar was forced to approach the court, which has now stayed the Unity Mall project," Premkumar said.

He questioned how the foundation stone was laid and construction began when the case was still pending. "When a legal battle is ongoing, land cannot be allotted. The state government should have known this," he asserted.

He further pointed out that even the football stadium land, which the court ordered to be transferred to the royal family, is yet to be handed over by the district administration.

Clarifying his stand, Premkumar said he was not concerned about the legal dispute, but wanted both the issue to be resolved amicably and Doddakere revived. "This is about Mysuru's heritage, ecology, and future. Let Doddakere live again," he added.



A file picture of the filled Doddakere near the famous Mysore palace which has now been converted into the exhibition ground.

Members of Mysuru Rakshana Vedike explaining the media about the need for rejuvenating the historic Doddakere in Mysuru on Wednesday.

Three-day Aspiring Mysuru" expo in Mysuru from Dec 18

MYSURU

Under the guidance of Mysuru-Kodagu Lok Sabha Member Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar, a mega exhibition titled "Aspiring Mysuru" is being organized by Delhi-based Prayas Events and Exhibitions. This grand three-day exhibition will be held from December 18, 19 and 20, 2025, at the Bharat Scouts and Guides Grounds, located behind the old DC office in Mysuru.

The exhibition will be inaugurated on December 18 at 11:00 a.m. by Trishikakumari Wadiyar, wife of the MP Yaduveer Wadiyar.

The exhibition will be open for three days from 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., with free entry for all.

Various Central Government ministries, government departments, Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), and leading national institutions will participate enthusiastically in this mega exhibition. In line with the vision of "Developed India 2047", they will showcase their latest initiatives, innovations, and contributions to development, said the exhibition organizer Mr. Vaneesh Gupta, while briefing the media.

Elaborating further, he stated that the Aspiring Mysuru Mega Exhibition has been conceived as a comprehensive, enriching, and interactive platform for the citizens of Mysuru. The grand event aims to promote public awareness, learning, and meaningful engagement, while providing visitors with detailed information on various government schemes, public welfare initiatives, and development programs.

The exhibition will showcase progress across diverse sectors including science and technology, electronics and information technology, environment and forests, climate change, health, ports and shipping, mining, handicrafts, and textiles. Through informative displays, interactive sessions, and knowledge-based experiences, the exhibition seeks to empower citizens and inspire the public to actively participate in the nation's journey of progress and innovation.

A major highlight of the event is its special focus on youth empowerment. Students will gain exposure to a wide range of career options, educational pathways, research opportunities, and skill development prospects, enabling them to make well-informed decisions for a bright future.

To further enrich the cultural essence of the exhibition, artisans will present handcrafted products, including handloom items, handicrafts, and natural fiber products that represent India's rich craft heritage. This initiative aims to introduce traditional Indian craftsmanship to the younger generation while showcasing exceptional skill and cultural legacy.

In addition, the exhibition will feature live demonstrations, information counters, cultural performances, and interactive seminars. It promises an engaging and informative experience for families, students, professionals, and the general public.

Visitors are invited to attend the Aspiring Mysuru Mega Exhibition–2025 and experience an exciting confluence of innovation, culture, knowledge, and public awareness under one roof. Enjoy a diverse and captivating showcase that celebrates the progress, heritage, and creative spirit of Mysuru.

Proper reading of the Constitution creates a conflict-free society

MYSURU

A peaceful and a harmonious society can be built if the Constitution is read in its entirety and properly understood, opined Prof. Asna Urooj, retired professor of the Department of Food & Nutrition Sciences, University of Mysore.

Speaking at the Minority Welfare Day programme organised on Wednesday as part of the National Integration Week celebrations, held at the auditorium of the Administrative Building of Karnataka State Open University in the city, she said that the importance of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's far-sighted vision is being realised now. She had thoughtfully incorporated many provisions into the Constitution and if the Constitution is followed properly, there will certainly be no riots or conflicts in our country. Like other countries, India too has minorities. The rights provided by the Constitution should be utilised effectively. Earlier, religion was not the primary concern; the nation was paramount. They must convey this to the next generation. The great responsibility of preserving this lies with them, she added.

Prof Asna said India has unity in diversity. There are people of different religions and people who speak different languages. Despite such vast diversity, there is unity among us. So far, they have all come together in unity, and they must continue this. They should also educate our children about this.

Vice-Chancellor of Karnataka State Open University, Prof. Sharanappa V. Halase, said that to build an egalitarian society, equal rights must be given to everyone. Education is very important. Providing education to children from minority communities will foster equality and help in building a just society. Minorities should make proper use of the facilities provided by the government. In the university, more than 5,000 minority students are being provided free education, and already 5,300 minority students have received free education. The government has allocated ₹500 crores for minority students.

Prof. Asna Urooj, retired professor of the Department of Food & Nutrition Sciences, University of Mysore, speaking at the Minority Welfare Day programme organised on Wednesday as part of the National Integration Week celebrations, at the Karnataka State Open University in Mysuru on Wednesday.

Special Lecture on "Wildlife Science"

MYSURU

A special lecture on "Wildlife Science" will be delivered by Dr. Honnavalli N. Kumar, an internationally renowned wildlife conservation scientist and a Fellow of the prestigious Indian National Science Academy (INSA) on December 18 at 4.30 PM at People's Park Library, which functions under the Mysuru City Central Library.

He is currently serving as Principal Scientist at the Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON), Coimbatore. The program will be attended by distinguished guests including: Eminent professors of the Indian National Science Academy, Retired Professor of Psychology from the University of Mysore, Editors-in-Chief of wildlife-related journals from the Indian Academy of Sciences, Bengaluru, and the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, Recipients of several national and international awards from prestigious institutions, and Prof. Dr. Mevasing, a recent recipient of the Prime Minister's Professorship Award.

QUICK READ

IT raids pub owned by Shilpa Shetty

Bengaluru
Income Tax Department officials have raided a pub owned by Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty in the city on Wednesday. A team of Mumbai IT officials raided Bastion Pub near Church Street in Bengaluru and inspected important documents. The IT team has also conducted raids in many places in Mumbai.

Multi-crore scam: Lokayukta raids KRIDL office

Bengaluru
Lokayukta officials raided the office of Karnataka Rural Infrastructure Development Limited (KRIDL) early Wednesday morning. The operation was carried out in the wake of serious allegations of misappropriation of funds to the tune of Rs 5 crore in a case, commission received from contractors and substandard work. A lot of complaints were lodged with the Lokayukta in this regard. The raid was led by Lokayukta SP Shivaprakash Devaraj and the office is examining important documents. Further investigations are underway to gather more information on the allegations.

BIAL reviews pickup system amid complaints

Bengaluru
Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL) has said that it is investigating complaints regarding the new pick-up system implemented at Kempegowda International Airport terminals and creating a conducive environment for passengers. The same system that is in place at all international airports has been implemented here as well. Although there was resistance when the new rule was implemented, this rule has been beneficial for 95 percent of passengers. Shuttle services are being provided to passengers with walking difficulties, including the disabled, children, senior citizens, etc., BIAL spokesperson said.

Strict guidelines for New Year parties in Bengaluru

The Police department has issued the guidelines in the interest of public safety and avoid any untoward incidents

BENGALURU

As the countdown to the New Year celebrations begins, the Bengaluru Police has taken an important decision. Alerted by the recent incident at a pub in Goa, the police have issued strict guidelines for the New Year celebrations to be held on December 31. These guidelines will be applicable to all places hosting events, including hotels, bars, pubs, and restaurants.

The City Police has issued 19-point guidelines, most notably a complete ban on bursting of firecrackers at event venues. The police have warned of strict action if these rules are violated. The Khaki force is set to implement further strict measures after the Goa pub tragedy.

Permission from the relevant departments is mandatory for the programs. Also, the time and noise limit set for the New Year celebrations must be strictly adhered to.

Tickets/passes should be distributed as space permits. Events cannot be held on the ground floor, parking lot, or terrace. Checking of those coming to the event should be done and suspicious persons should be informed to the police. If drug use is found at the venue, the local police should be informed immediately. If drugs are found during a police raid, a case will also be registered against the owner/manager of the building.

Fire extinguishers should be installed and exit doors should be large. CCTV cameras should be installed at every venue of the event and footage should be collected for at least 30 days. Large numbers of female private security guards should be appointed at venues where women are present. Agencies deploying security guards and bouncers should be registered with 'PSARA'.

If celebrities, DJs, or actors are invited, their information must be provided to the local police station. No liquor is allowed in unlicensed outdoor venues. No group gatherings or illegal private parties are allowed in hotel rooms. Any untoward incident should be reported to the police immediately. The Police have taken these strict measures to prevent any untoward incidents during the New Year celebrations. The organizers have been clearly warned that violation of the rules will lead to strict legal action.

20-30% hike in pollution-linked ailments in city

BENGALURU

The city's air pollution has led to a spike in several ailments among children, older adults and those with pre-existing conditions.

Doctors have seen a rise in pollution-related ailments over the past two to three weeks. This is due to city's air quality, which has fluctuated between satisfactory and moderate over the last two weeks, they say.

Cases of respiratory infections, asthma flare-ups, eye irritation and dry skin are significantly higher this season, as are the severity of the symptoms. This spike has affected the "vulnerable category" the most, children, older adults and those with pre-existing conditions.

Dr Chandil Gunashekar, a general physician in Whitefield, has observed a 20-25 percent increase in Upper Respiratory Tract infections (URI) compared to last December. Cough, asthma symptoms and respiratory infections are the most common complaints, he says.

Dr Sachin Kumar, Director of Pulmonology and critical care medicine at a private hospital, says, outpatient footfall for respiratory complaints has increased by 20 percent in the last two weeks. Both infectious and non-infectious respiratory symptoms are higher this year, he adds.

> Dr Kumar says that viral illnesses that earlier resolved in two to three days are now lasting up to 10 days. Also, patients with diabetes, kidney or heart disease, and people without prior respiratory illness are developing pneumonia. In some cases, they require oxygen support or ICU.

Patients are coming in with issues of breathlessness, cough, throat irritation, wheezing and sneezing, either as symptoms of an allergy or a viral infection.

Among allergy-related respiratory complaints, Dr Shalini Joshi, internal medicine specialist at a private hospital, estimates a 30% increase. "Consistently poor air quality worsens people's tolerance to pollen. Pollutants make the airway more reactive and sensitive, worsening existing pollen allergies," she adds.

Eye-related complaints are another concern. Dr Naren Shetty, opthalmologist and director at a private hospital, says eye irritation, dryness and redness have increased by around 30 percent this year. Allergic conjunctivitis cases are up by nearly 60 percent compared to December 2024, he addscare, he says.

Users oppose artificial turf plan, seek to preserve open access

BENGALURU

After protests stalled plans of turf transformation at Nandan Ground, residents of yet another locality are up in arms against a move to install artificial turf at a football ground. Users of Sir Ground in Jeevanahalli, east Bengaluru, have written to Sarvagnanagar MLA and minister KJ George and Bangalore Central MP PC Mohan to help retain the accessible nature of the ground. Sir Ground, named after former ITI employee and football player-turned-coach Mukundan, is located next to Jeevanahalli railway line near Cox Town.

V Ramakumar, a veteran football player who trained under Mukundan at the ground, also opposed any changes. Many who trained here went on to play at state and national levels representing various teams. They were later recruited by govt departments and PSUs. Ramakumar, who played for several teams, including Coal India Ltd, from where he retired as an assistant engineer, said most players were from socio-economically disadvantaged sections. Such children will not be able to pay in case the ground is handed over to private management, he said, adding that artificial turf is now being discouraged across the globe as it is seen as a health hazard.

R Narayanaswamy, who retired as an administrative officer at Defence Research and Development Organisation's Aeronautical Development Establishment, said he began training at the ground in class 8 and captained the Bangalore University football team for four years. Many people have been able to make a livelihood because of their sporting talent nurtured at Sir Ground, he said, adding that five players joined the Indian Army through the Madras Engineering Group. The ground serves around 10 surrounding localities. It must remain the same to help produce the next generation of footballers from this part of the city.

Para-athlete S Balaram, a national- and international-level player of shot put, wheelchair racing, wheelchair tennis, and wheelchair cricket, among others, told that the ground was the only nearby facility suitable for athletes with special needs. Balaram's recent feat was his team's third-place fine at the Asian Para Throwball Championship in Cambodia.

BSNL rolls out in-house Sanchar Mitra app nationwide

BENGALURU

Telecom major BSNL announced the nationwide rollout of its in-house developed customer registration mobile application, 'Sanchar Mitra', marking a key step in restoring and streamlining new customer onboarding services. Developed by BSNL engineers from across the country, the new application replaces the previous Sanchar Aadhaar app, which was earlier used for Aadhaar-based e-KYC verification to add customers to the BSNL network. The earlier app had been developed by a private firm and was used by BSNL retailers and franchisees to digitally verify customer identity. The transition became necessary after the contract with the authorised provider of the Sanchar Aadhaar app expired at the end of November 2025. The expiry had led to temporary disruptions in customer registration services, including the issuance of new and replacement SIM cards across the country.

Traffic cop assault on auto driver sparks public outrage

BENGALURU

The incident of a traffic police personnel assaulting an auto driver in the city's Hebbal traffic limits has been the subject of much debate in the city. Instead of fining an auto driver who had come on the wrong route, the traffic police have assaulted him, and it is alleged that the driver was seriously assaulted to the point where his ear was bleeding. This has highlighted the arrogance of the police personnel. Moreover, the driver was an Ayyappa Maladhari, he may have done something wrong. Instead of being fined, assaulting him to the point where his ear was bleeding shows the bad behavior of the police.

The auto driver who was attacked has been identified as Balakrishna, who was travelling from Jalahalli to Kaval Bhairasandra to a temple, loaded with coconuts. At this time, the traffic police personnel stopped the auto after noticing that he was traveling on the wrong route. However, instead of following the process of imposing a fine for violating the rules, it is said that the traffic police personnel physically assaulted the driver. As a result of the assault, blood flowed from Balakrishna's ear, creating a chaotic atmosphere at the scene.

The incident took place near the railway gate in Bhadrappa Layout, Hebbal. The verbal altercation and assault between the assaulted auto driver and the traffic police personnel were filmed on mobile phones by those present at the scene, and the video is currently going viral on social media.

Cold wave: Increase in number of patients at KC General Hospital

BENGALURU

> People are hesitant to even step out of their homes due to the temperature of 14 degrees Celsius. People are being admitted to hospitals due to the effects of the cold wind in the city.

Cold winds are intensifying in the city. The effect of the drop in temperature is also affecting people's health. The number of patients coming to KC General Hospital for check-ups for colds, flu and cough is also increasing.

The city has been recording the lowest temperature for the past two or three weeks. People are shivering in the cold. People are hesitant to even step out of their homes due to the temperature of 14 degrees Celsius. People are being admitted to hospitals due to the effects of the cold wind in the city. Children and adults are coming to the city's KC General Hospital with cold and cough. The health of the children is fluctuating, and doctors are monitoring them

It is normal to visit the hospital due to cough, cold, and flu during winter. But this time, due to the extreme cold, more people are coming to the hospital. While some are getting tested and returning home, some are being admitted to the hospital for treatment. This cold has also affected the health of children, and the children's ward is also full. It will be colder by the end of this month, and the temperature may drop to record levels. So, wear warm clothes and take care of your health. Parents should also be careful about the health of their children.

HC WARNS OFFICIALS OF DISMISSAL FOR DELAYING CASE INFORMATION

BENGALURU

The High Court has issued a stern warning that government officials who fail to provide information requested by the government lawyer in any case or who delay in providing information will be investigated and ordered to be dismissed from service.

The bench of Justice Suraj Govinda Raj issued this warning while hearing a petition filed by Vishwanathan, a senior citizen of Chitradurga.

Vishwanathan, a retired government employee, bought a plot of land and built a house with the money he earned during his service. The house is currently in the custody of his son and daughter. They are not taking care of their father.

Therefore, the Chitrudurga Sub-Divisional Officer had ordered Vishwanath's daughter and son on February 22, 2023, directing them to immediately hand over the house to their father. Vishwanathan had filed an application in the High Court alleging that this order had not been implemented.

PROTECTING LAKE

₹391-cr revival plan to rejuvenate Byramangala Lake

BENGALURU

After decades of choking on the polluted waters of Vrushabhavathi, the time has come for Byramangala lake on the outskirts of Bengaluru to begin cleansing itself. In a long-awaited move, the govt has approved a Rs 391-crore revival plan that promises to transform the long-contaminated waterbody into a clean and dependable resource over the next three years.

According to govt sources, the minor irrigation department, custodian of the lake and Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) will jointly take up the rejuvenation work. NS Boseraju, Minister for Minor Irrigation, confirmed that the cabinet has cleared the proposal and much of the work will be executed by BWSSB.

The board will set up a Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) near the lake, ensuring no raw sewage or untreated water from upstream enters the lake. We will be carrying out the embankment and other rejuvenation work to restore the lake, he said. The Minister adding that earlier efforts to stop sewage flow into the lake, including a diversion canal proposed with the forest, environment and ecology department, were stalled because of a pending petition before Karnataka High court.

Senior BWSSB engineers told that with the govt keen on developing Bidadi as a satellite township, rejuvenating the lake has become crucial.

The state cabinet has now approved the establishment of the dedicated STP near the lake. Spread across 1,000 acres, Byramangala lake once supported the livelihoods of people in more than 20 surrounding villages. Over the years, however, untreated sewage flowing from Bengaluru via Vrushabhavathi has severely polluted the waterbody.BWSSB Chairperson Ram Prasath Manohar said the new STP will cost about Rs 230 crore and will be operational in three years. "Once commissioned, the STP will treat about 100 MLD of sewage. The tertiary treated water will be released into the lake, and this will be the third phase of the project in the Vrushabhavathi valley. The final quality of water will be ultrapure. Subsequently, the plant's capacity will be enhanced, he said.

QUICK READ

Weavers' Welfare Committee announces bandh

Doddaballapura

The Weavers' Welfare Committee has decided to call for a bandh in Doddaballapura by the end of December, demanding immediate government intervention to resolve the deepening crisis in the local weaving industry. The decision was taken during a district-level consultation meeting held in the city, which was attended by representatives of various political parties and weavers' organisations. The meeting discussed the severe impact of the large-scale import and sale of Surat sarees in Doddaballapura, which has traditionally been known as an important weaving hub.

CSR-funded govt school building construction launched

Anekal

The construction of a new government school building at Soluru village under Vanakanahalli Gram Panchayat in Anekal taluk formally began with a Bhumi Puja ceremony, supported by funds from Bhash Company under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative. The ceremony was performed by Pandalika Kamath of Bhash Company along with Field Education Officer G. Gurumurthy, marking a significant step towards strengthening educational infrastructure in the region. Speaking on the occasion, Field Education Officer G. Gurumurthy emphasised the importance of collective efforts in developing government schools.

Cong warns of agitation if Centre obstructs Yettinahole project

Congress leaders in Tumakuru resolved to launch village-level protests if the Centre continues to obstruct the Yettinahole project

TUMAKURU

Congress leaders in Tumakuru have decided to intensify their agitation from the grassroots level if the Union government continues to obstruct the implementation of the Yettinahole drinking water project. The decision was taken during a meeting held in the city, where party leaders expressed strong displeasure over what they described as repeated hurdles created by the Centre in executing the long-pending project.

Addressing the meeting, Congress leaders said the Yettinahole project is crucial for providing drinking water to the drought-prone districts of central Karnataka, including Tumakuru, Chikkaballapura, Kolar, Ramanagara and parts of Bengaluru Rural. They alleged that despite the state government's commitment and investment, the Centre has been delaying clearances and approvals, affecting timely completion of the project.

The leaders warned that if the Union government does not cooperate, the party will take the issue directly to the people. If the Centre continues to create obstacles, we will be forced to launch a widespread agitation starting from the village level, they said. They added that public awareness programmes, protests and demonstrations would be organised across rural and urban areas to highlight the importance of the project.

Speakers at the meeting said the Yettinahole project is not a political issue but a matter of survival for lakhs of people who face acute drinking water shortages every summer. They accused the Centre of adopting an anti-Karnataka stance by delaying environmental and forest-related approvals, despite similar projects being cleared in other states.

Congress leaders also criticised the local BJP leadership, alleging that they have failed to exert pressure on the Union government to protect the interests of the state. They said elected representatives from the ruling party at the Centre should stand with the people of Karnataka rather than remain silent spectators.

Maize procurement centres to be opened in Chitradurga

Chitradurga district to open maize procurement centres to purchase 750 metric tonnes as per government orders

CHITRADURGA

The Chitradurga district administration has initiated steps to open maize procurement centres for the 2025–26 marketing season, following government orders and based on demand from poultry feed manufacturing institutions. A total of 750 metric tonnes of maize will be procured through designated cooperative societies in the district, officials said.

The decision was taken during a meeting of the District Task Force Committee held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner T. Venkatesh. As per the directions issued in the meeting, three procurement centres will be established to facilitate smooth purchase of maize from farmers at the government-declared support price.

Accordingly, procurement centres will be opened through the Primary Agricultural Credit Society (PACS) Aimangala to purchase 250 metric tonnes, the Taluk Agricultural Produce Cooperative Marketing Society (TAPCMS) Hiriyur to procure another 250 metric tonnes, and the PACS Madanayakanahalli to procure the remaining 250 metric tonnes of maize.

The Deputy Commissioner has instructed the procurement agency, Karnataka State Cooperative Marketing Federation Limited, Chitradurga, to purchase maize strictly in accordance with government norms. Under the guidelines, maize will be procured at a price of ₹2,400 per quintal. Farmers will be allowed to sell maize at the rate of 12 quintals per acre, with a maximum limit of 50 quintals per farmer.

Officials have also stressed that only quality maize meeting prescribed standards will be accepted at the procurement centres.

As per the quality norms, moisture content in maize should be less than 12 per cent, fungal infection should not exceed 3 per cent, and the grain count should be at least 350 kernels per 100 grams. In addition, toxin levels must be below 20 parts per trillion (PPT), while impurities such as husk, stones and other waste material should be less than 1 per cent.

Parigrah Trust pledges educational support for students

HOSKOTE

Highlighting the need to support talented children from rural backgrounds, Parigrah Trust founder Sunil Kumar announced that the trust would bear the expenses for the further education of poor and meritorious students studying at Balenahalli Government School. He made this assurance during a programme organised at the Balenahalli Government Lower Primary School in Sulibele hobli of Hoskote taluk. Sunil Kumar was speaking after distributing tracksuits and learning materials to students on behalf of the Parigrah Trust. He said many children in rural government schools possess exceptional talent and dedication, but often lack financial and social support to continue their education beyond the primary level.

District-level millet cookery competition on December 30

CHITRADURGA

The Department of Agriculture has announced the organisation of a district-level millet and forgotten foods cookery competition in Chitradurga on December 30, as a prelude to the State-Level Millet and Organic International Trade Fair–2026. Applications have been invited from interested participants, with December 30 set as the last date for submission.

According to officials, the competition will be held at 10 am at the office of the Joint Director of Agriculture, located near the APMC Yard in Chitradurga city. The event aims to promote the nutritional value of millets and revive awareness about traditional and forgotten foods prepared using indigenous crop varieties.

The competition is open to the general public across the district, excluding students and officials or staff of the Agriculture Department. Interested participants must submit applications along with a photograph, clearly mentioning their name, address, the dish to be prepared, ingredients required, preparation time and a brief description of the cooking method. Applications must be submitted in person at the Joint Director of Agriculture's office before 10 am on December 30.

Participants have been instructed that each contestant is allowed to prepare only one dish, which may be a sweet, savoury, or a forgotten traditional food. The dish must be prepared at home and brought for display at the venue by 10 am on the competition day, after completing registration at 9 am. Winners of first, second and third prizes at the state level in the previous year's millet cookery competition will not be eligible to participate this year. Only vegetarian dishes made from millets and forgotten foods will be permitted.

Millet-based dishes may be prepared using crops such as jowar, ragi, foxtail millet, pearl millet, kodo millet, barnyard millet and little millet. Forgotten foods include traditional recipes made from indigenous landraces, nutritionally rich crops cultivated by a limited number of farmers using local or traditional farming practices.

Cyclone Bakung brings dense fog and cold winds

DEVANAHALLI

The effects of Cyclone Bakung, which formed over the Indian Ocean, have begun to make themselves felt in parts of Karnataka, with Vijayapura hobli in Devanahalli taluk experiencing an unusual spell of cold, foggy and cloudy weather. Residents, already grappling with winter conditions, are finding it increasingly difficult to cope as the cyclone's influence has intensified the chill across the region. Dense fog enveloped Vijayapura and surrounding areas until nearly 9 am, significantly reducing visibility and disrupting normal morning routines. Even after the fog lifted, the weather remained overcast throughout the day, accompanied by persistent cold winds. The gloomy conditions continued well into the evening, making it uncomfortable for people to step outside.

Elderly residents and young children were particularly affected by the sudden drop in temperature and lack of sunlight. Many families reported that senior citizens and children stayed indoors for most of the day, as the cold conditions made it difficult to venture out. Local residents described the situation as a cold war imposed by Cyclone Bakung on people who were already enduring the winter season. According to local weather observations, the maximum temperature in Vijayapura hobli was recorded at 22 degrees Celsius, while the minimum temperature dipped to 17 degrees Celsius.

NAME CHANGE

I, **CHIRAYIL EBRAHIM**, S/o. Chirayil Moideen Haji, Resident of Kolakeri PO Napoklu, Madikeri Taluk, Kodagu Dist -571214, Karnataka, have changed my name to **C M IBRAHIM**, vide affidavit dated: 16.12.2025 before notary MEER HASSAN, Bengaluru.

NAME CHANGE

I, **ALEENA TASKEEN B F**, W/o. Qumar Alam, Resident of No. 39, 1st Main, 2nd Cross, Umarbagh Layout, JP Nagar, Bengaluru -560078, Karnataka, have changed my name to **F ALEENA TASKEEN**, vide affidavit dated: 17.12.2025 before notary MEER HASSAN, Bengaluru.

NAME CHANGE

I, **ZABI ULLA KHAN Y,** S/o. Yakub Khan Resident of No.176 , G Floor 3rd Cross, Lakshmi Layout Arekere Bannerghatta Road Bengaluru-560076, have changed my name to **ZABI ULLA KHAN,** Vide Affidavit Dated: 16.12.2025 before notary R. BASAVARAJA, Bengaluru.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Inbaraj A S/o C.Amburose , residing at no.1353, 2 nd Cross, Manjunath Layout,Chamundinagar, R T Nagar, Bengalore -560032
AND
I , C.Amburose S/o Chinnappan , residing at no.1353, 2 nd Cross, Manjunath Layout, Chamundinagar, R T Nagar, Bengalore -32
AND
I,A Anthoniyammal W/o C Amburose, residing at no.1353, 2nd cross, Manjunath Layout, Chamundinagar, R T Nagar, Bengalore -32
1) I, Inbaraj A, Aadhar number 234642921494 ,
2) I, C Amburose , Aadhar number 926382619887
3) I, A Anthoniyammal, Aadhar number 284584158083 , I am citizen of india and I am residing as above address.
4)That Inbraj A and Inbaraj A ,pertain to one and same person i.e , INBARAJ A.
5) That Ambrose and C Amburose pertain to one and same person i.e , C AMBUROSE.
6) That Anthoniamma and A Anthoniyammal, pertain to one and the same person i.e, A ANTHONIYAMMAL.
7) That we are making this affidavit for the purpose of changing names on Karnataka Secondary Education Examination Board Certificate.
We have verified that the contents of the above affidavit are true correct to the best of my knowledge and nothing has been concealed therein.

NAME CHANGE

I, **MUBEENA BEGUM SYED YOUSUF**, W/o. Syed Yousuf Bareed, Resident of No.6/2, 3rd Cross Muniveerappa Layout Shampura R.T.Nagar Post, Bengaluru-560032, have changed my name to **MUBEENA BEGUM**, Vide Affidavit Dated: 16.12.2025 before notary R. BASAVARAJA, Bengaluru.

NAME CHANGE

I, **RESHMA SAMIULLA** W/o. Abdul Parveez, Resident of No.17, Basheera Manzil 2nd Cross Kausar Nagar Dinnur Main Road R.T.Nagar Post, Bengaluru-560032, have changed my name to **RESHMA,** Vide Affidavit Dated: 16.12.2025 before notary R. BASAVARAJA, Bengaluru.

NAME CHANGE

I, **FIRDAUS MULLA**, D/o. Abdul Shakoor Husain Mulla, Resident of No. 53, 2nd Floor, 1st Block, 15th Cross, R T Nagar, Bengaluru -560032, Karnataka, have changed my name to **FIRDAUS ABDUL SHAKOOR MULLA**, vide affidavit dated: 17.12.2025 before notary MEER HASSAN, Bengaluru.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, RUDRESHI M alias RUDRESH MALLESHAPPA S/o K MALLESHAPPA, R/o #540/49, Ashirwada, Mouneshwara Badavane, Nittuvalli New Extension, Davanagere, Karnataka-577004, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as M RUDRESHI.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, MABAVVA KOPPAL W/o S R RAJASAB, R/o # 01, Ward No. 01, Near Basavana Katte, Siddrampur, Sindhnur, Raichur, Karnataka - 584128, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as TASLIM BEGUM.

CHANGE OF NAME

I S DEEPAK alias DEEPAK S alias DEEPAK SURESH S/O B A SURESH, R/O #3, Deepthi Nivas, 8th Cross, LBS Nagar, Bangalore, Karnataka-560017, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as ARYAN VARMA.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, GYANA RANJAN JENA S/o HIRDA NANDI JENA R/o No 012, Wing 1B, Suncity Gloria Apartments, Sarjapura Main Road, Decathlon, Doddaknnahalli, Carmelaram, Bangalore South, Bengaluru, Karnataka-560035, have changed the name of my minor son HIMNISH RANJAN aged 14 years and he shall hereafter be known as HIMNISH RRANJJAN.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, SHANTHARAJU K S/O KRISHNAPPA, R/O Rajakallahalli, Kolar, Karnataka - 563101, have changed the name of my minor son TRIVANN S aged 05 years and he shall hereafter be known as ADETHYA THANNVEK S.

CHANGE OF NAME

I SAIF ATHER KHAN S/O MUMTAZ AKHTAR HUSAIN R/O Villa 144 Phase 1, The Empyrean Society, Anchemuskur Village, Chikkathirupathi Post, Malur, Kolar, Karnataka-563160, have changed the name of my minor daughter SEHER AKHTAR KHAN aged 14 years and she shall hereafter be known as SAHAR AKHTAR KHAN.

CH CLASSIFIEDS
To place a classified ad contact:
080-41209042

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA
THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT DIVISION, VIJAYAPUR.
No:EE/PWD/SINDAGI/2025-26/3570 Dated:16.12.2025
NOTICE INVITING QUOTATIONS FOR Installation of Street lights on the main street of Sindagi City in the Sindagi constituency FOR PREPARATION OF ESTIMATES

Sealed Quotations are invited from the reputed Company / Firms Quotation for Installation of street lights on the main streets of Sindagi city in the Sindagi constituency as per the enclosed specifications on the terms and conditions as given herein for preparation of estimates.
1. The rates should be inclusive of all Services and applicable taxes
2. The rates should be quoted for the quality items and in case if any change in items this should be clearly stated.
3. The rates should be valid for the period of at least (1) One months from the date of quotations and the bidders are bound to submit at these rates, when orders are placed within the validity period.
4. Sealed quotations should be reach this office on or before **23.12.2025** @ 4.00 P.M. or handed over personally in this office. Delay in postal transit will not be considered.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, PWD Division, Vijayapur
ವಾಸಾಸಂಇ/ವಿಜಯಪುರ/549/ಕೆಎಸ್ಎಂಸಿಎ/2025–26

Government of Karnataka
PUBLIC WORKS, DEPARTMENT
Office of the Executive Engineer, Chamarajanagara Division, Chamarajanagara
e-mail: eecnr@kpwd.gov.in/pwdeechner@gmail.com, Phone/Fax: 08226-222027
BRIEF TENDER NOTIFICATION
(Through Kppp.karnataka.gov.in portal only)
H(Two Cover System: Section-1-Technical Bid and Section-2-Financial Bid)
Short Term Tender Notification No 22/2025-26 Dated:15.12.2025 (Call-2,4 & 5)

Item rate tenders are invited through Kppp.karnataka.gov.in portal only on behalf of Governer of Karnataka from Eligible registered civil Contractor in KPWD in Standard Bid document **KW-3 & KW-4** form The Total no of works is 1, **H/A :- 5054-03-337-0-16-154 SH Bridges Works** maximum estimated cost is Rs, 1500.00 lakhs, The Total no of works is 2, **H/A:- 5054-04-337-0-01-154 MDR Improvements Works** Minimum estimated cost is Rs, 500.00 lakhs, maximum estimated cost is Rs, 750.00 lakhs, **AND** The Total no of works is 1, **H/A :- 5054- 80-190-0-01-132 Kalasanka Works** maximum estimated cost is Rs, 70.00 lakhs, Further changes in this Notification will be Published in Kppp.karnataka.gov.in Only. Date of events as follows:

1	Date and Time for downloading the tender document from the Kppp.karnataka.gov.in portal	From 22.12.2025 to 02.01.2026 upto 16.00 Hrs
2	Pre-Bid Meeting Date	24.12.2025 in Division Office Meeting Hall at 11.00 AM
3	downloading the tender document from the Last Date and Time	02.01.2026 Up to 16.00 Hrs
4	Date & Time for opening of Technical bid	03.01.2026 after 16.30 Hrs
5	Date & Time for opening of Financial bid	05.01.2026 Morning 11.00 AM

More information can be had from the web site: **https://www.Kppp.karnataka.gov.in** & Any other details required can be obtained from office of the under signed during office hours.

No: DIPRICHANAGAR: 567: 2025-26 **Executive Engineer, PWD Division, Chamarajanagar**

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
Office of the Executive Engineer, No.1, Building Division, SJP Campus, Bengaluru, Phone: 080-22255210
No. EE/Bld.1/AE-LH/AE-5/2025-26/61 Date: 16.12.2025
INVITATION FOR SHORT-TERM TENDER (IFT) CALL -2

The above Department invites Tenders through e-procurement portal of GoK **(http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in)** from eligible Tenderers for below mentioned works. Name of Work: **(1) Providing and laying of main sewer pipe line at Race View Building, Race View Cottage and KHB-4Minister quarters at Race Course Road, Bengaluru.** Tender Reference:PWD/2025-26/BD/WORK_INDENT29937. Approx. value: **Rs. 35.08 lakhs.** EMD: **Rs. 70,200/-.** Period of Completion: **03 Months. (2) Annual Maintenance of firefighting equipment system, fire hydrants, Sprinkler system, repairs to firefighting pumps and refilling of fire extinguishers and providing essential water supply and sanitary fittings, painting, polishing and other allied works to Vikasa Soudha, Bengaluru From 01.10.2025 to 31.07.2026. (Reserved for SC)** PWD/2025-26/BD/WORK_INDENT22756/Call-2. Approx. value of work: **Rs. 63.90 lakhs.** EMD: **Rs. 64,000/-.** Period of Completion: **10 Months.** Cost of Document: **As per KPP Portal.** Last date for downloading Tender through e-procurement portal and submission through online: **24.12.2025 up to 4.00 PM.** Date of opening the Tender: **as per e-procurement guidelines.** Further information and other details can be obtained from the above office or from e-procurement portal **http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in**

Sd/- Executive Engineer
DIPR/DD-C.P/4489/KSMCA/2025-26

QUICK READ

Sabarimala gold case: Ex TDB officer arrested

Thiruvananthapuram
The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the Sabarimala gold loss cases on Wednesday arrested former Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) administrative officer S Sreekumar, sources said. The arrest came two weeks after the Kerala High Court rejected his anticipatory bail plea, citing strong allegations. The court had also denied bail to former TDB secretary S Jayasree. It noted that granting pre-arrest bail would weaken the probe. Sreekumar is the seventh person arrested in the case.

RG Kar college case moved to Calcutta High Court

New Delhi
The Supreme Court on Wednesday transferred the RG Kar Medical College trainee doctor rape and murder case to the Calcutta High Court. The top court, which had taken suo motu notice of the case in 2024, directed that all case records be sent to the high court and a copy of the status report be shared with the victim's parents. The incident, reported in August last year, had triggered nationwide outrage and widespread protests.

Delhi construction workers to get Rs 10K compensation

New Delhi
Delhi Labour Minister Kapil Mishra on Wednesday announced Rs 10,000 compensation for construction workers who lost income due to GRAP III and GRAP IV anti-pollution measures. He said all government and private offices must ensure 50% staff work from home starting Thursday, or face action. Compensation will be given to registered workers for the days these restrictions are in place, excluding essential services like hospitals and fire departments. Mishra also criticised the Aam Aadmi Party for politicising the issue.

President Murmu begins five-day winter sojourn in Hyderabad

President Droupadi Murmu arrived in Hyderabad to begin her annual winter visit and was warmly welcomed at Air Force Station

HYDERABAD

President Droupadi Murmu reached Hyderabad on Wednesday for a five-day winter sojourn. She was warmly welcomed at Air Force Station, Hakeempet, by Telangana Governor Jishnu Dev Varma, Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, ministers D. Sridhar Babu and Seethakka, along with Chief Secretary K. Ramakrishna Rao, Director General of Police B. Shivadhar Reddy, and senior civil and defence officials.

The President later proceeded by road to Rashtrapati Nilayam at Bollarum, where she will stay until December 21. Police maintained tight security and traffic diversions along the route. During her stay, she will inaugurate the National Conference for Chairpersons of Public Service Commissions on December 19 and address the Brahma Kumaris' conference on 'Timeless Wisdom of Bharat' on December 20.

Extensive arrangements have been made by central and state departments, including Rashtrapati Nilayam officials. The police, fire services, and medical teams are on standby, while special teams address potential wildlife issues such as snakes, monkeys, and honeybees in the expansive green premises.

Rashtrapati Nilayam, originally built in 1860 as the British Resident's country house, became the President's official retreat after Hyderabad's accession to India in 1948. President Rajendra Prasad was the first to stay here in 1955, and since then, every President has conducted official work from this southern sojourn annually.

Final batch of Apache attack helicopters reaches India

NEW DELHI

India receives the final batch of AH-64E Apache attack helicopters, completing the contracted delivery and strengthening India-US defence partnership, regional security, and modernisation of Army Aviation Corps capabilities.

The US Embassy in India on Wednesday welcomed the arrival of the final batch of Boeing AH-64E Apache attack helicopters for the Indian Army, calling it a fulfilment of commitments under the India-US defence partnership. The deliveries, which had faced repeated delays, now complete the contract for six helicopters. The embassy said the milestone strengthens regional security, deepens collaboration in co-production, training, and technology exchange, and reflects the growing US-India defence relationship.

The Indian Army will deploy the helicopters in Jodhpur after assembly, joint inspections, and formalities. The AH-64E Apache is equipped with Hellfire missiles, 70 mm Hydra rockets, Stinger missiles, a 30 mm chain gun, and Longbow fire control radar, offering 360-degree coverage and advanced night operations. The AH-64E Version 6 is optimised for Multi-Domain Operations, integrating sensors, long-range weapons, and network connectivity for complex battlefield scenarios.

The Army Aviation Corps continues to expand its firepower with the Apache fleet, alongside the induction of 90 indigenous Light Combat Helicopters (LCH) Prachand and the Rudra version of the Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH). The Indian Air Force already operates 22 Apache helicopters deployed in Ladakh and western sectors.

The first batch of Apache helicopters, initially expected in early 2025, arrived in July after multiple delays. The completion of deliveries marks another step in modernising India's attack helicopter capabilities and enhancing joint operational readiness with the US.

Hyd man's role in Australia shooting sparks alarm: Rao

HYDERABAD

Telangana BJP chief N Ramchander Rao on Wednesday described the involvement of a Hyderabad man in the recent mass shooting at Bondi Beach, Australia, as an "insult" to India and a serious security threat. Sajid Akram, one of the suspects in the attack that killed 15 people, is originally from Hyderabad, Telangana Police confirmed on Tuesday.

Rao urged local authorities to investigate how Akram left India and the contacts he maintained after moving to Australia. He stressed that the incident reflects a dangerous trend that could tarnish India's and Hyderabad's image and suggested a police inquiry into Akram's family history and background.

"Unfortunately, the people involved are from India and specifically Hyderabad. Though Akram moved abroad 27 years ago, Hyderabad may still have sleeper cells linked to ISI and ISIS," Rao said.

Sajid Akram, 50, completed his B.Com in Hyderabad before migrating to Australia in November 1998 in search of employment. He retained his Indian passport until his death in the attack. Australian authorities have termed the incident a "terrorist attack inspired by Islamic State," according to Federal Police Commissioner Krissy Barrett.

The Telangana BJP leader's remarks highlight growing concerns about links between Indian nationals and global terror networks, urging stricter monitoring and investigations to prevent such incidents in the future.

Odisha police take action after temple throne photograph goes viral

Viral Jagannath Temple photo sparks security concerns

PURI

Odisha Police on Wednesday filed a case after a photograph of the 'Ratna Singhasan' (bejewelled throne) inside the sanctum of Shree Jagannath Temple went viral on social media, raising questions about the shrine's security. Puri SP Prateek Singh said the case was registered at Singha Dwar police station under sections of the Shree Jagannath Temple Act, and the cyber team is monitoring platforms where the photo was shared.

Despite a strict ban on cameras and mobile phones inside the temple, the picture of the deities—Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra, and Lord Jagannath—was taken at close range. Singh noted that action can be taken only after identifying those who clicked and shared the image. He also called for stronger legislation, saying such violations have become frequent.

Jagannath culture researcher Bhaskar Mishra emphasised that photography restrictions are crucial for shrine security, given potential threats. He urged authorities to investigate how a person managed to smuggle a camera or phone inside.

The incident has caused outrage among servitors, devotees, and the public, who are demanding accountability. Local resident Rathindra Mishra said responsibility lies not only with the person who clicked the picture but also with those who failed to enforce temple rules.

The police investigation continues as authorities work to ensure stricter security measures at the 12th-century shrine, highlighting the need to balance tradition with modern safety protocols.

Surname error in West Bengal voter list sparks controversy

KOLKATA

A clerical error in the draft voter list in West Bengal has sparked a political row, with CPI(M) leader Md Salim and his son Atish Aziz listed under the Hindu surname 'Awasthi'. Atish Aziz, a registered voter from the Kolkata Port Assembly constituency, discovered the mistake while reviewing the draft electoral rolls released on December 16 as part of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise.

Aziz shared on social media that both his name and his father's name had the incorrect surname added. "My father has been a politician for decades. If such an error can happen in his case, one can only imagine what might have happened to others," he said. He also questioned the purpose of conducting the SIR at a high cost if such basic inaccuracies occur.

Aziz criticized sections of the media and the BJP for claiming the SIR process would target Muslims, noting that the error instead "turned both my father Md Salim and me into Brahmins." He shared images of the draft rolls showing 'Awasthi' appended to their names.

The CPI(M) has informed its booth-level agent, who is coordinating with the Chief Electoral Officer to rectify the issue. The electoral rolls were published following the digitisation of enumeration form data, marking the first phase of the SIR exercise in the state.

The incident has drawn attention to the need for careful verification during voter list revisions, highlighting concerns about accuracy and fairness in the electoral process.

Congress MPs protest over alleged misuse of ED

NEW DELHI

Congress MPs on Wednesday staged a protest in the Parliament House complex against the Centre, alleging misuse of the Enforcement Directorate following court relief to Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi in the National Herald case.

The protest highlighted the Delhi court's refusal to take cognisance of the ED's money laundering charges against the two leaders, which Congress MPs said reaffirmed that truth had prevailed. Lifting a banner reading "Satyamev Jayate, Truth Prevails," the MPs gathered at the Makar Dwar steps, raising slogans against the government and demanding an apology from the Narendra Modi administration.

Congress leaders participating in the protest included general secretary K C Venugopal, AICC general secretary Mukul Wasnik, MPs Shashi Tharoor, Tariq Anwar, Kumari Selja, K Suresh, and Manickam Tagore. Earlier, the party had demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah following the court relief.

The opposition party also vowed to expose what it called "vendetta politics" against its leadership. Party president Mallikarjun Kharge said at a press conference that Congress workers are agitated and will show their strength, both inside and outside Parliament, against the alleged misuse of investigative agencies. "We will keep fighting them and teach them a lesson," he said.

The Delhi court on Tuesday dismissed the ED's charge, noting that the probe originated from a private complaint and not a formal FIR. The decision provides relief to Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, and five others named in the case, marking a significant moment in the ongoing National Herald matter.

Punjab Governor holds talks with union ministers in Delhi

NEW DELHI

Punjab Governor and Chandigarh administrator Gulab Chand Kataria on Wednesday met Union Ministers Nitin Gadkari, Manohar Lal Khattar, and Gajendra Singh Shekhawat in Delhi to discuss key issues concerning Punjab and Chandigarh. The meetings focused on infrastructure development, urban planning, road connectivity, public welfare initiatives, and coordinated efforts between the Centre, the state, and Chandigarh administration.

Governor Kataria highlighted the importance of sustainable development, improved civic amenities, and the speedy implementation of ongoing and proposed projects to benefit the region's residents. He stressed that efficient collaboration between different levels of government is crucial for achieving tangible progress in both urban and rural areas.

Upon arrival in Delhi, Kataria was warmly welcomed at Parliament by Union Minister Ravneet Singh Bittu and Rajya Sabha MP Satnam Singh Sandhu, reflecting the importance of the discussions.

The talks underscored the Punjab Governor's commitment to addressing regional development priorities and enhancing the quality of life for people in Punjab and Chandigarh through effective planning and execution of government projects.

SHIMLA FOOD CARNIVAL

Food carnival boosts tourism, empowers women in Shimla

SHIMLA

The Food Carnival, held alongside the SARAS Fair at Shimla's historic Ridge Ground, has become a major tourist attraction while providing sustainable livelihoods for rural women across Himachal Pradesh. Organised under the Government of India's Rural Livelihood Programme, the ten-day event showcases authentic Himachali cuisine and handmade products, drawing large crowds. Over 100 women from self-help groups manage multiple stalls, with 17 food stalls run by more than 50 women serving traditional hill dishes like Kangri Dham, Hamirpuri Dham, Bilaspuri Dham, and local delicacies from Kinnaur to Lahaul-Spiti.

Tourists from across India have praised both the food and the initiative. Arun Gupta from Uttar Pradesh called the carnival "a wonderful effort to provide employment to rural women," while Rakesh Bahadur Singh from Banaras said it filled a gap for local cuisine seekers.

Participants from all 12 districts of Himachal Pradesh are taking part, gaining confidence, income, and exposure. Rita Thakur from Nirmand Block, Kullu, said the carnival has given women a platform to promote traditional dishes like Siddu while earning to support their families.

According to organiser Sakshi Sharma, the food stalls alone have recorded sales exceeding ₹10 lakh in just a few days. The initiative also focuses on skill development, teaching women to interact with customers and showcase Himachal's culture effectively.

Alongside food, handicraft stalls, including Chamba chappals and HIMIRA products, are drawing visitors, highlighting the state's rich cultural diversity. The carnival strengthens the link between tourism, traditional cuisine, and women's empowerment, making it a key attraction in Shimla this season.

QUICK READ

'Cong spreading false claims on National Herald case'

New Delhi

The BJP on Wednesday accused Congress of misleading the public about the National Herald case. Party spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said the trial court did not dismiss the case but only refused to take cognisance of a private complaint, allowing the Enforcement Directorate to continue its probe. He added that the case is still pending in the Delhi High Court, with Sonia Gandhi as Accused 1 and Rahul Gandhi as Accused 2, alleging the Gandhi family relies on propaganda and deception.

Man kills wife and daughters in Shamli

Muzaffarnagar

A man allegedly killed his wife and two minor daughters over a family dispute in Shamli district, police said on Wednesday. The bodies were buried inside their home in Ghari Daulat village on December 10 but discovered only on Tuesday. Accused Farukh has been arrested and confessed, officials said. Police stated he shot his wife Tahira and elder daughter Afreen, then strangled five-year-old Shaireen. A case of triple murder is registered, and security in the village has been tightened following protests by the victim's family.

BJP criticises DMK for ignoring public welfare

Ranipet

Tamil Nadu BJP chief Nainar Nagenthran on Wednesday accused the DMK government of confronting the Centre instead of working for the people. He said the state blocked the setting up of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas and raised language issues, indulging in diversionary tactics rather than public welfare. Nagenthran also criticised DMK's opposition to the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission Bill, 2025, and questioned VCK's silence on local incidents like water contamination and hooch tragedies, calling their selective protests strange.

Hanumangarh farmers renew stir over proposed ethanol project

Opposition grows in Hanumangarh as farmers rally against a controversial ethanol plant

JAIPUR

Hanumangarh district in Rajasthan remains on edge as farmers intensify their protest against a proposed ethanol manufacturing unit, calling a large Mahapanchayat to press their demands. The agitation has gained momentum after discussions between farmer representatives and the district administration failed to reach a solution.

The Mahapanchayat is set to take place on Wednesday at the grain market in Hanumangarh Junction, after being shifted from the District Collectorate area due to security considerations. Farmers argue that the ethanol plant, coming up in Rathi Kheda village of Tibbi tehsil, poses a serious threat to groundwater levels and could lead to air and water pollution, affecting farming and public health.

In preparation for the gathering, farmer groups have travelled across nearby villages to mobilise support. At the same time, the district administration has tightened security arrangements, fearing unrest. Prohibitory orders under Sections 144 and 163 have been enforced across the district, restricting assemblies, rallies and processions.

Authorities have also banned the carrying of weapons, sticks and the use of provocative slogans or speeches. Officials warned that strict action would be taken against anyone violating the orders. As an added precaution, internet services at the district headquarters have been suspended for two days to prevent rumours and misinformation.

Additional police personnel have been deployed from neighbouring districts to maintain law and order. Despite these measures, farmer leaders remain firm, stating that their protest will continue until the construction is halted.

The opposition to the plant has been ongoing for more than a year. While protests were largely peaceful initially, tensions escalated after construction resumed under police protection in November, leading to clashes, arrests and injuries during demonstrations near the factory site.

Central government clarifies status of Nehru papers

Continued from page 1

NEW DELHI

The Centre clarified Nehru's private papers are not missing but with Sonia Gandhi. It urged their return, saying they form part of India's documentary heritage and are accessible for research

The Union government on Wednesday asserted that documents related to India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, are not missing from the Prime Ministers' Museum and Library (PMML), but clarified that 51 cartons of papers sent to Congress leader Sonia Gandhi in 2008 have yet to be traced.

The clarification followed demands from the Congress for an apology after the Ministry of Culture informed Parliament that no Nehru-related records were found missing during a routine verification exercise at PMML. The government maintained that the annual inspection did not reveal any absence of documents or correspondence linked to Nehru, countering claims made by the opposition.

In a detailed statement, the ministry explained that in April 2008, a request was made by a representative of Sonia Gandhi seeking the return of private family letters and notes of Jawaharlal Nehru. Acting on this request, PMML transferred 51 cartons of papers to her. The ministry said these consignments are therefore not "missing," as their transfer was formally recorded, but added that their current whereabouts remain unclear.

The ministry further stated that PMML has been in continuous communication with Gandhi's office since then, repeatedly seeking the return of the documents. It stressed that these papers constitute part of India's national documentary heritage and should remain in PMML's custody to ensure public access for citizens and researchers.

The issue resurfaced after a PMML Society member flagged concerns over restricted access to Nehru's private papers, prompting renewed correspondence with Gandhi. Meanwhile, Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat reiterated in a written Lok Sabha reply that no Nehru documents were found missing during the 2025 inspection. Congress leader Jairam Ramesh responded by reiterating the party's demand for a government apology.

Yogi Adityanath honours PAC personnel for their courage and service

UP CM Yogi commemorates PAC Foundation Day 2025

LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday congratulated the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) on its Foundation Day, recalling the bravery of PAC personnel during critical terror attacks. He highlighted their valour during the December 13, 2001, Parliament attack, stating that PAC officers on duty "responded bravely and killed all five terrorists." He also remembered their courage during the July 2005 terrorist attack at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi complex in Ayodhya, where a joint team of CRPF, PAC, and UP Police eliminated all the attackers.

The Foundation Day celebrations included multiple demonstrations showcasing the skills and discipline of PAC forces in the presence of the CM. Yogi Adityanath praised the 78-year legacy of the PAC, noting its unwavering dedication in maintaining public order and safety in India's most populous state.

He also recounted the PAC's origins: in 1948, the U.P. Military Police and U.P. State Armed Constabulary were merged to form the Provincial Armed Constabulary. The force was established to handle serious law and order situations without frequent Army deployment. Though primarily serving Uttar Pradesh, the PAC has had the honour of operating across the country.

The CM lauded the PAC's continued role in upholding law and order, protecting citizens, and exemplifying courage, discipline, and professionalism, reinforcing the significance of the force in ensuring public safety.

Supreme Court directs NHAI, MCD to shift nine toll plazas

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) to consider either temporarily closing or relocating nine toll plazas at Delhi's borders to ease traffic congestion and reduce vehicular emissions amid severe air pollution in the capital. The court described the recurring pollution crisis as an "annual feature" and urged practical, enforceable solutions rather than mere policy framing.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant asked the MCD to decide within one week whether temporary closure of toll plazas is feasible. The court, however, refused to interfere with the Delhi government's decision to close schools for nursery to Class 5 students, noting that winter break was imminent.

The bench emphasised strict implementation of existing pollution control measures and directed the Delhi government to verify construction workers affected by curbs and ensure direct financial assistance. Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati informed the court that around 7,000 workers have been verified out of 2.5 lakh registered workers, and assured that funds would be transferred directly to their accounts. The court cautioned against leakages and urged consideration of alternative employment for workers impacted by pollution restrictions.

Moradabad developing Trishul War Museum with MiG-27

MORADABAD

The Moradabad Municipal Corporation is developing the Trishul War Museum, which will display military equipment such as tanks, a MiG-27 aircraft, the INS Vikrant, and other armaments supplied by DRDO and the defence ministry. The museum will also feature automated models and projections to highlight the valour of the Indian armed forces, along with a map of India showing national borders. Trenches and simulated wartime conditions will help recreate battlefield experiences for visitors.

Municipal Commissioner Divyanshu Patel said the construction is 90% complete, with the remaining audio-visual segment expected to finish within 10-12 days. "The museum will showcase the bravery of our armed forces in all operations, including Operation Sindoor. We aim to inaugurate it soon, following deadlines set by the CMO and PMO.

Meanwhile, the Indian Army received the final three Boeing Apache attack helicopters, which will soon join the 451 Army Aviation Squadron in Jodhpur. The helicopters were transported on an Antonov An-124 aircraft and will be deployed after assembly, joint inspections, and other formalities. The Apache, equipped with Hellfire missiles, Hydra rockets, Stinger missiles, a 30 mm chain gun, and Longbow fire-control radar, is designed for multi-domain operations, including night-vision missions.

The Indian Army described the induction as a "milestone moment," significantly enhancing operational capabilities. The Indian Air Force already operates 22 Apache helicopters in Ladakh and western sectors.

BJP rejects Rahul Gandhi's claim on manufacturing decline

NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Wednesday refuted Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's remark that India's manufacturing sector is declining, calling it "fake news" against the country's growth story. BJP spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari highlighted significant progress in electronics and automobile manufacturing over the past decade and beyond.

Bhandari, in an X post, stated that total electronics production grew from ₹1.9 lakh crore in 2014-15 to ₹11.3 lakh crore in 2024-25, a 495 per cent increase. Electronics exports surged 760 per cent, from ₹38,000 crore to ₹3.27 lakh crore. Mobile manufacturing also saw rapid growth, with production units rising from 2 in 2014-15 to nearly 300 in 2024-25, and production value increasing over 2,900 per cent. Mobile phone exports jumped from ₹1,500 crore to ₹2 lakh crore during the same period.

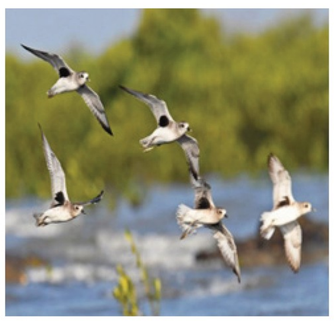
On automobiles, Bhandari said vehicle production rose from 2 million units in 1991 to 28 million units in 2024, a 14-fold increase. India aims to produce 50 million vehicles by 2030 and become one of the top two auto manufacturers globally by 2047. He added that these figures demonstrate "manufacturing-led growth backed by data, not slogans," and dismissed Rahul Gandhi's claims as denial of reality.

Rahul Gandhi, during a visit to Germany, had said India's manufacturing is declining and needs to increase production for economic growth. He cited his visit to a BMW factory and the success of Indian-made vehicles, stressing that production is essential for a country's progress. The BJP's response comes as it highlighted India's record growth in electronics and automobiles under PM Modi's leadership.

GUJARAT WILDLIFE TOURISM

Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary attracts over 52,000 visitors

GANDHINAGAR



Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary, located near Jamnagar, attracted 52,400 visitors in 2024-25, highlighting Gujarat's growing commitment to wildlife conservation and eco-tourism. Spanning over 600 hectares, the sanctuary features a unique mix of freshwater lakes and saltwater marshes, offering habitats for a diverse array of bird species. The Forest and Environment Department reported an increase in recorded bird species from 317 in 2023-24 to 332 in 2024-25, reflecting the sanctuary's flourishing biodiversity.

Recognised internationally for its ecological importance, Khijadiya was designated a Ramsar Site in 2022. The state has invested in visitor-friendly infrastructure, including watchtowers, bird-watching platforms, interpretation centres, Van-kutirs, selfie points, and informative signboards, making the sanctuary both accessible and engaging for tourists, researchers, and bird enthusiasts.

The sanctuary's ecological richness is shaped by the interaction of freshwater inflows and coastal tides, along with a network of embankments and dikes that create microhabitats supporting various wildlife species. These diverse environments not only enhance the sanctuary's attractiveness for birdwatching and eco-tourism but also demonstrate Gujarat's scientific and integrated approach to environmental conservation.

As Rajkot prepares to host the Vibrant Gujarat Regional Connect (VGRC) in January 2026, Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary serves as a living example of how ecological preservation can go hand in hand with economic development. Its thriving biodiversity complements the state's broader initiatives in tourism, agriculture, climate resilience, and sustainable infrastructure. By balancing environmental stewardship with development, Khijadiya exemplifies Gujarat's vision of "Prosperity with Sustainability," showcasing the state's commitment to protecting natural heritage while promoting sustainable growth for visitors, researchers, and local communities alike.

AICTE launches IDE bootcamp for PM SHRI school staff

NEW DELHI

AICTE Chairman Prof. TG Sitharam on Wednesday inaugurated the Innovation, Design and Entrepreneurship (IDE) Bootcamp for principals and teachers of PM SHRI Schools through an online event. The bootcamp is being conducted simultaneously at 14 locations across 12 states.

Addressing participants, Prof. Sitharam stressed that education should go beyond rote learning to enable students to think creatively, design solutions, and innovate. He said the IDE Bootcamp aims to equip teachers with experiential, product-oriented learning methods and to integrate design thinking, innovation pedagogy, and entrepreneurship into schools, fostering a confident and future-ready generation of problem-solvers.

Additional Secretary and Director, Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSEL), Dheeraj Sahu, highlighted the importance of school-level leadership, noting that the bootcamp provides principals and teachers with tools and frameworks to guide innovation under the PM SHRI Schools initiative. AICTE Vice Chairman Dr. Abhay Jere described the programme as a collaborative effort to embed innovation in school education through teacher training, school innovation councils, and buildathons, creating mentors for students from early stages through higher education and startups.

The bootcamp is jointly organised by DoSEL, AICTE, Ministry of Education's Innovation Cell (MIC), NCERT, and the Wadhwani Foundation. Phase I runs from December 17 to 19, 2025, across 14 locations, followed by Phase II from December 22 to 24, and Phase III from January 7 to 9, 2026, covering 21 and 15 locations respectively. Over 200 experts will train more than 9,000 participants across 50 centres.

The initiative follows successful capacity-building workshops for District Education Officers and DIET members held from October 30 to December 5, 2025. AICTE reaffirmed its commitment to promoting innovation and entrepreneurship at all educational levels, aligning with the objectives of the National Education Policy 2020.

Hooda urges Centre to prioritize welfare over politics

PANCHKULA

Congress leader and Haryana Assembly Opposition Leader Bhupinder Singh Hooda on Wednesday termed the National Herald case "politically motivated" and urged the Centre to prioritise public welfare over "political revenge." Hooda led a protest in Panchkula with Congress workers under Rao Narender Singh. He said the court's verdict proved the political intent behind the case. His remarks came after a Delhi court declined to take cognisance of the Enforcement Directorate's complaint, observing that proceedings under the PMLA cannot continue without an FIR for the scheduled offence and that a private complaint cannot replace it. Meanwhile, Congress leaders in Karnataka protested in Belagavi, while Opposition MPs demonstrated in Parliament, alleging vendetta politics and misuse of agencies.

QUICK READ

India Signals Concern Over Dhaka March

Dhaka

India has not made a formal statement but has indicated concern over an anti-India march planned in Bangladesh. Citing security reasons, the Indian Visa Application Centre in Dhaka closed early on Wednesday, with appointments to be rescheduled. The move comes ahead of a march to the Indian High Commission by a hardline group. Meanwhile, the Ministry of External Affairs summoned Bangladesh's High Commissioner over security concerns following threats and strong anti-India remarks by a Bangladeshi political leader.

Iran Boosts Ties, Stays Vigilant

Tehran

Iran on Tuesday highlighted its focus on strengthening regional cooperation while maintaining strong security preparedness. Government spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani said President Masoud Pezeshkian's recent visits to Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan resulted in 14 agreements aimed at expanding trade and economic ties. She stressed the government's support for private sector growth and removal of business hurdles. On security, Mohajerani said Iran remains alert to regional threats but open to respectful and realistic dialogue with the United States.

China Staff Disrupt Taiwan Tea Award

Taipei

Staff from the Chinese embassy disrupted an award ceremony at an international tea contest in Paris after Taiwan was mentioned and its flag displayed. Despite the interruption, organisers continued the event and the udience backed the Taiwanese awardee. The incident drew criticism from Taiwan's foreign ministry, which urged China to follow international norms. The award highlighted Taiwan's global recognition, with participants from several countries attending the competition.

PM Modi Highlights Green Vision in Ethiopia

Global South charting its future, India and Ethiopia share vision: Prime Minister Narendra Modi

ADDIS ABABA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday planted a sapling at the Ethiopian Parliament under India's "Ek Ped, Maa Ke Naam" initiative, underlining India's commitment to environmental protection and sustainable development. The gesture was linked with Ethiopia's Green Legacy Initiative, reflecting a shared resolve by both countries to safeguard nature for future generations.

Addressing a joint session of the Ethiopian Parliament, Prime Minister Modi conveyed India's greetings of friendship and goodwill. Referring to Mahatma Gandhi's idea of trusteeship, he said humanity does not own the Earth but holds it in trust for generations to come. He noted that India and Ethiopia, as ancient civilisations, share deep cultural bonds and can be seen as natural partners, with Ethiopia at the crossroads of Africa and India at the heart of the Indian Ocean.

The Prime Minister highlighted the shared vision of India and Ethiopia for the Global South, calling for fair development, accessible technology, respect for sovereignty, shared prosperity and lasting peace. He also drew parallels between the constitutions of the two nations, pointing out that both place people at the centre of national destiny.

Prime Minister Modi recalled the contribution of thousands of Indian teachers who have worked in Ethiopia over the decades, saying they played an important role in the country's development and earned deep respect among its people.

Earlier, he paid tribute at the Adwa Victory Monument and visited the Adwa Museum, honouring Ethiopia's long struggle for freedom and sovereignty. After his address, the Prime Minister interacted with members of Parliament and reaffirmed India's commitment to strengthening ties with Ethiopia based on shared values, trust and cooperation.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said the Global South is shaping its own future, speaking at a joint session of the Ethiopian Parliament. He said India and Ethiopia share a common vision based on fair development, accessible technology and respect for sovereignty. PM Modi stressed the need to reform global systems to reflect present realities and emphasised the deep historical, cultural and economic ties between the two countries.

Voting Begins to Elect New UML Leadership

KATHMANDU

Voting to elect new leadership of the Communist Party of Nepal–Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) began in Kathmandu on Wednesday morning during the party's 11th General Convention. The process started about an hour later than planned due to technical problems in electronic voting machines (EVMs).

Polling had earlier been scheduled to begin on Tuesday night but was postponed after repeated glitches forced delegates to leave the queues at the Bhrikutimandap venue. UML General Secretary Shankar Pokhrel said the delay was unavoidable because of the technical issues. Another reason for the postponement was opposition from the faction led by Ishwar Pokhrel, which objected to voting during night hours.

A total of 2,263 delegates are eligible to vote, and electronic machines are being used throughout the process. Technicians estimate that it will take around 30 minutes for each delegate to cast a vote. While 11 candidates have already been elected unopposed, the nominations of two others were cancelled for violating party rules. Delegates are voting to elect 301 central committee members representing different regions and groups.

Party chair KP Sharma Oli is seeking a third straight term but faces a strong challenge from Ishwar Pokhrel, who is backed by former President Bidya Devi Bhandari. Oli loyalist Shankar Pokhrel is contesting again for general secretary, with Surendra Pandey emerging as a serious rival.

Several senior leaders have broken ranks and joined the Pokhrel camp, leading party insiders to predict mixed results. While Oli is still seen as influential, the race for general secretary is expected to be close. Campaigning around the venue has remained intense, with posters, rallies and online outreach dominating the area.

Voting has started at CPN-UML's general convention in Kathmandu after delays, with party leaders and delegates choosing a new leadership amid close contests and visible internal divisions.

Global Petition Urges G7 Action on China

LONDON

More than 500,000 people across the world have signed a petition calling on the Group of Seven (G7) nations and several other countries to take action against alleged forced organ harvesting by the Chinese Communist government. The petition was launched in July 2024 by Doctors Against Forced Organ Harvesting (DAFOH) and the International Coalition to End Transplant Abuse in China. As of December 15, it had gathered 505,970 signatures from people in 34 countries. The campaign urges governments to address what it describes as serious human rights violations involving the removal of organs from prisoners of conscience in China. The appeal is directed at the G7 countries—the United States, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United Kingdom—as well as Argentina, Australia, India, Israel, Mexico, South Korea and Taiwan.

Pakistan to Launch Secure Messaging App for Officials

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan is preparing to introduce a locally developed secure messaging application, named "Beep," for government employees in the coming months. The app is aimed at providing a safe and reliable communication platform for public sector institutions across the country.

The National Assembly Standing Committee on Information Technology and Telecom was informed that Beep is in the final stages of development and is expected to meet its project deadline of June 30, 2026. The application has been developed by the National Information Technology Board (NITB) and is inspired by China's WeChat platform.

NITB Chief Executive Faisal Iqbal Ratyal told the committee that Beep has been locally built and certified by relevant authorities, including the National Computer Emergency Response Team (NCERT), making it suitable for official government use. Committee chairman Syed Aminul Haque directed the NITB to ensure the app is rolled out on time.

Ratyal said the app's main purpose is to offer a secure messaging system for government employees nationwide. The rollout will be done in phases, beginning with federal ministries and their attached departments. The initial launch is expected within the next two months.

Attack highlights ongoing risks faced by polio teams and police

Policeman, Brother Killed After Polio Duty

LAKKI MARWAT

A police constable and his brother were shot dead by unidentified gunmen in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province after the officer completed security duty with a polio vaccination team, officials said on Tuesday. The attack took place near the Chwar Khel area of Lakki Marwat district.

According to police, Constable Amir Nawaz was travelling back to his village along with his brother, Ameer Mohammad, when armed men riding motorcycles opened fire on them. Both brothers were killed on the spot. The victims were siblings of former district councillor Ali Gul. Their bodies were later shifted to the district headquarters hospital for post-mortem examination.

Soon after the incident, a heavy police contingent reached the area and launched a search operation to trace the attackers. Security was tightened in and around Lakki Marwat amid concerns over possible further attacks. Police officials said checkpoints were strengthened and patrols increased to maintain order.

Funeral prayers for the two brothers were held later in the evening and were attended by senior officials, including District Police Officer Nazir Khan, Deputy Commissioner Hamidullah Khan, SP Investigation Murad Ali Khan, and other police and administrative officers. A large number of relatives and local residents also attended the prayers.

Earlier the same day, another police constable deployed on polio duty and a passerby were shot dead in a separate incident in Bajaur district. The attacks highlight the continuing threats faced by polio workers and the security personnel assigned to protect them.

Authorities said investigations are underway in both cases, and assured that all possible efforts are being made to identify and arrest those responsible.

Transport Strike Hits Karachi Port, Industry Under Pressure

KARACHI

A nine-day strike by cargo transporters has badly disrupted operations at Karachi port, raising serious concerns among business leaders that economic activity in the city and across Sindh could come to a halt. Industries are facing shortages of raw materials, while finished goods remain stuck.

Business groups have urged the Sindh government to step in and resolve the issue, warning that prolonged disruption is damaging production and supply chains. In a letter to the Sindh chief minister, Abdul Aleem, Secretary General of the Overseas Investors Chambers of Commerce and Industry (OICCI) said the situation had become alarming for industry and trade. He noted that while limited relief was seen in Punjab after raising the matter with provincial authorities, conditions in Sindh and at Karachi port remain unchanged. OICCI members reported that trucks from Punjab are still unable to reach Karachi, severely affecting port movement. Several major manufacturing units are close to shutting down, with at least one reporting that production had already stopped. Others expect closures within days as raw materials fail to arrive and finished goods remain stranded on highways.

The Pakistan Vanaspati Manufacturers Association said supplies of edible oil, ghee and other essential items have been disrupted. Its chairman warned that stopping raw material flows could damage the entire production cycle and hurt the broader economy. Imported consignments are also stuck at ports, increasing financial losses due to demurrage and detention charges. The Pakistan Association of Large Steel Producers said the strike is having a devastating impact on industry and could lead to job losses and wage cuts.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

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	4		7		3		8	
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5	1	4	6	3	2	9	8	7
7	9	8	5	1	4	2	3	6
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3	4	2	1	7	5	6	9	8
9	8	5	2	4	6	3	7	1
1	6	7	3	8	9	4	5	2
2	5	1	9	6	7	8	4	3
8	3	9	4	2	1	7	6	5
4	7	6	8	5	3	1	2	9

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

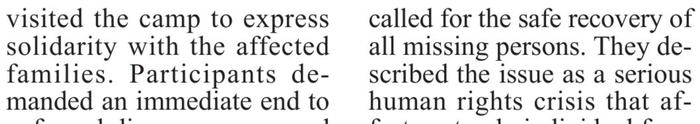
Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

Quetta Protest Against Disappearances Marks Over 6,000 Days

BALOCHISTAN

The protest camp organised by the Voice for Baloch Missing Persons (VBMP) against enforced disappearances completed 6,031 days on Tuesday, continuing its long-running sit-in outside the Quetta Press Club. The camp has remained a symbol of resistance and hope for families seeking information about their missing relatives.

On the occasion, people from different walks of life visited the camp to express solidarity with the affected families. Participants demanded an immediate end to enforced disappearances and called for the safe recovery of all missing persons. They described the issue as a serious human rights crisis that affects not only individual families but society as a whole. Supporters urged state institutions to act in line with the constitution and the law to ensure justice. VBMP Chairman Nasrullah Baloch said the length of the protest clearly shows that the issue remains unresolved. He stated that the families will continue their peaceful protest until all missing persons are traced and their loved ones are given justice. Enforced disappearances have remained a deeply contentious issue in Balochistan for years.



WATER CRISIS PAKISTAN

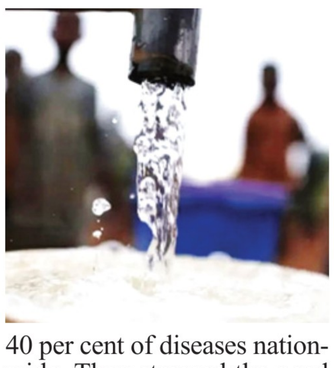
Seminar Flags Pakistan's Growing Safe Water Crisis

ISLAMABAD

Only 47 per cent of Pakistan's population has access to safe drinking water, experts warned at a seminar organised by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) in Islamabad. The discussion highlighted the country's worsening water-quality crisis and its serious impact on public health, economic productivity and sustainable development.

Speaking at the seminar titled "The Thirst for Safety: Water Quality and Public Health in Pakistan", Dr Hifza Rasheed, Director General (Water Quality) at the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR), said Pakistan's per capita freshwater availability has fallen sharply from 5,260 cubic metres in 1951 to below 1,000 cubic metres in 2024. This places the country among water-scarce nations.

Dr Rasheed and Dr Shujaat Farooq, Dean (Research) at PIDE, said unsafe drinking water is responsible for nearly 40 per cent of diseases nationwide. They stressed the need for urgent, coordinated and climate-resilient reforms to secure Pakistan's water future. Experts, researchers and students attending the event discussed how poor water quality is affecting health, productivity and long-term development.



Dr Farooq noted that despite Pakistan's natural water resources, contamination, overuse and weak institutional coordination have made water insecurity a major public health challenge. Citing UNICEF data, he said nearly 70 per cent of households use contaminated water, leading to widespread illnesses such as diarrhoea, hepatitis and typhoid.

Dr Rasheed added that agriculture uses about 93 per cent of freshwater, yet irrigation efficiency remains below 40 per cent. She warned that unsafe water causes around 53,000 child deaths annually and contributes to high child stunting rates. Industrial waste, pesticides and untreated sewage remain major pollutants, while climate-related floods have further worsened contamination and disease risks.

QUICK READ

ARCs to Double Stressed Road Asset Recoveries by FY27

New Delhi

Cumulative recovery rates for stressed operational road projects by asset reconstruction companies (ARCs) will surge about 120 per cent by the next fiscal (FY27) from FY25 levels, a report said on Wednesday. The report from Crisil Ratings said that improvement will be driven by timely annuity payments by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), healthy toll collections and resolutions through the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC). Further, having gained substantial capabilities in the road sector, ARCs are also eyeing acquisition of terminated assets banking on collaborative efforts by multiple stakeholders to pave the way for timely recoveries, the report said.

India Achieves Self-Reliance in Space Transportation: Singh

New Delhi

India has achieved self-reliance in space transportation systems and can launch satellites up to 10 tonnes to Low Earth Orbit (LEO) and 4.2 tonnes to Geo-Synchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO), said Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology, in the Parliament on Wednesday. In a written reply in the Lok Sabha, Singh shared that the feat has been achieved through the currently operational PSLV, GSLV, and LVM3 launch vehicles. These launch vehicles have enabled independent space access to satellites for earth observation, communication, navigation, and space exploration.

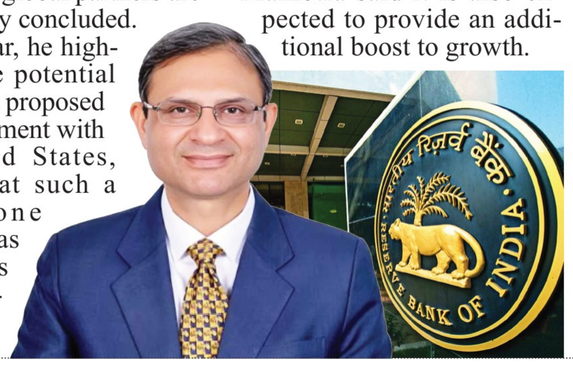
RBI SIGNALS PROLONGED LOW RATES AMID STRONG GROWTH

RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra signals low interest rates amid strong growth, subdued inflation, and optimism over trade deals

NEW DELHI

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Sanjay Malhotra has indicated that key policy interest rates are likely to remain low for a long period, supported by the central bank's economic projections and prevailing macroeconomic conditions. According to a report published by the Financial Times, Malhotra expressed confidence that India's economy is witnessing robust growth while inflation remains firmly under control, creating favourable conditions for maintaining an accommodative monetary environment.

The RBI Governor further noted that India's economic growth could exceed the central bank's current projections if ongoing trade negotiations with major global partners are successfully concluded. In particular, he highlighted the potential impact of a proposed trade agreement with the United States, stating that such a deal alone could add as much as half a percentage point to India's economic growth. While the RBI has not yet undertaken a detailed assessment of the potential benefits of a trade agreement with the European Union, Malhotra said it is also expected to provide an additional boost to growth.



Responding to concerns raised by some economists regarding the quality and reliability of India's economic data, Malhotra defended the robustness of official figures. He acknowledged that data revisions do occur from time to time but emphasised that the overall numbers remain credible and reliable for policy formulation. On December 5, the RBI announced a 25 basis point cut in the repo rate, bringing it down to 5.25 per cent from 5.5 per cent earlier. The move was aimed at supporting economic growth amid favourable inflation trends.

Modi Visit Boosts India–Oman Strategic, Economic Ties

Indian business leaders in Oman express optimism as Prime Minister Modi's visit promises stronger ties and expanded cooperation

MUSCAT

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi prepares to arrive in Oman, members of the Indian business and professional community have expressed strong optimism, describing the visit as a significant opportunity to further strengthen India–Oman relations. Indian industry leaders said the visit comes at a crucial moment when both nations are keen to elevate their partnership through structured dialogue and enhanced economic cooperation across key sectors.

Business leaders highlighted that sectors such as energy, manufacturing, healthcare, tourism and logistics stand to benefit substantially from closer engagement. There is also growing anticipation that discussions during the visit could accelerate progress towards a possible Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which is expected to provide a major boost to bilateral trade and investment flows. Nirmal K. Minda, Executive Chairman of Uno Minda Limited, said the Prime Minister's visit could unlock collaboration across multiple sectors by leveraging the natural strengths of both economies. He pointed out that Oman's low energy costs combined with India's strong manufacturing ecosystem create a complementary partnership with long-term potential.

From an Indian perspective, Minda noted that Oman-based investors could benefit by looking at India as a preferred manufacturing destination under the government's Make in India initiative. Manufacturing in India offers access to skilled manpower, which is a challenge in Oman, while Oman can play a critical role as a logistics and trading hub connecting the region, including the UAE, he explained. He added that such collaboration would help integrate supply chains and enhance regional trade efficiency.

Echoing similar sentiments, Sangita Reddy, Joint Managing Director of Apollo Hospitals Enterprise Limited, said the Prime Minister's visit would further strengthen the already close relationship between India and Oman.

India has significantly expanded bioenergy capacity over a decade, driven by govt incentives and targeted renewable energy programmes

India Expands Bioenergy with Major Biomass, Waste, Biogas Additions

NEW DELHI

India has added substantial bioenergy capacity over the last ten years, reinforcing its push towards cleaner and more sustainable energy sources, Parliament was informed on Wednesday. The country has added 2,361 MW of biomass-based power capacity, 228 MWe of waste-to-energy capacity, and established around 2.88 lakh biogas plants during this period, propelled by a range of government-supported schemes and financial incentives.

In a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, Minister of State for New and Renewable Energy Shripad Yesso Naik said the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) has been actively supporting the installation of bioenergy projects across the country. These efforts are currently being implemented under the National Bioenergy Programme (NBP), Phase-I, which was notified on November 2, 2022, with a total budget outlay of ₹998 crore for the period from 2022–23 to 2025–26.

The minister noted that government support for bioenergy projects has been consistent over the past decade through multiple schemes. These include the National Biogas and Manure Management Programme (NBMMP) implemented during the 12th Five-Year Plan, and the New National Biogas and Organic Manure Programme (NNBOMP), which was operational from 2018–19 to 2020–21. These initiatives have played a key role in expanding decentralized energy access, improving waste management, and promoting the use of organic manure in agriculture.

In addition, several other schemes were launched to strengthen biomass-based power generation. These include programmes to promote grid-interactive biomass power and bagasse-based cogeneration in sugar mills during the 12th Plan period, as well as initiatives focused on energy generation from urban, industrial and agricultural waste and residues. The Scheme to Support Promotion of Biomass-based Cogeneration in Sugar Mills and other industries was also implemented between 2018–19 and 2020–21.

SBI Sees Rupee Rebound in Next Fiscal Half

MUMBAI

Geopolitical uncertainties driven by the delay in the India-US trade deal have been the single-most important reasons for the rupee sliding against the US dollar, an SBI Research report said on Wednesday, adding that the rupee is likely to bounce back strongly in the second half of the next fiscal. India's trade data shows the remarkable resilience in navigating through prolonged uncertainty, more protectionism and labour supply shocks. While the geopolitical risk index has moderated since April 2025, the current average value of the index for April-October 2025 is much greater than its decadal average.

India's Fish Production Surges 38% Under PMMSY Scheme

NEW DELHI

India's fish production has surged from 141.60 lakh tonnes in 2019–20 to around 197.75 lakh tonnes in 2024–25, registering an increase of 38 per cent since the launch of the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) in 2020, the Parliament was informed on Wednesday.

In a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying Minister Rajeev Ranjan Singh stated that this growth has been mainly driven by the expansion of inland aquaculture, marine fishery development, strengthening the value-chain infrastructure, and policy interventions under the PMMSY scheme.

India's fish and fishery product exports currently stand at Rs 62,408.45 crore, reflecting strong sectoral performance. Since the implementation of the PMMSY in 2020-21, export earnings have risen by about 33.7 per cent, increasing from Rs 46,662.85 crore in 2019-20 to Rs 62,408.45 crore in 2024-25, he added.

India's average aquaculture productivity has increased to approximately 4.7 tonnes per hectare by early 2025, from around 3 tonnes per hectare before the launch of the PMMSY, and the top-5 states in inland fish production are Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Odisha, wherein Bihar stands at 4th position, the minister said.

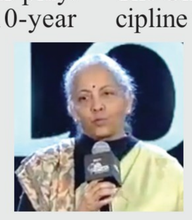
The Gross Value Added (GVA) of the fisheries sector during 2023-24 has been reported to be Rs 3,68,124 crore in comparison to Rs 2,12,087 crore during 2018-19. The share of the fisheries sector in the GVA of the agriculture sector has increased from 7 per cent in 2018-19 to 7.55 per cent in 2023-24. The Centre is focusing on the areas in fisheries technology, aquaculture, and value addition by supporting a basket of interventions along the fisheries value chain including quality fish production, expansion, diversification and intensification of aquaculture, promotion of export oriented species.

Cutting debt-to-GDP ratio will be govt's core focus in coming fiscal: FM Sitharaman

NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday said that reducing the country's debt-to-GDP ratio will be the core focus for the government in the next financial year (2026-27). Speaking at a media event here, Sitharaman stressed that it is crucial to bring down the debt-to-GDP ratio, which crossed 60 per cent during the Covid period. It is already coming down, but we need to reduce it further, and this will be a core focus in the next financial year, the Finance Minister said, noting that RBI documents and studies show worrisome debt-to-GDP ratios in some states.

Unless managed within FRBM (Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act) limits and high-interest debt is reduced, states borrow to service loans, not development -- a poor fiscal play. This threatens the 10-year momentum for Viksit Bharat by 2047, she pointed out.



The Finance Minister said that the central government has set goals for transparency in budgeting, ensuring fiscal management meets accountability standards. We've brought down debt-to-GDP from over 60 per cent post-Covid; it's declining, with debt reduction as the core focus on the next financial year (fiscal deficit remains a marker). Entrepreneurial bankers note the changing ecosystem, she added,

Sitharaman said that the government is also working to deepen the bond market to allow more funds to flow in. The Union government's discipline under Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi's steady leadership now in its third term enables India's global positioning to negotiate at the high table. This strength comes from a stable government, she said.

Sitharaman further stated that with financial inclusion, credit access via Mudra, and everyone having accounts, every Indian's credit footprint has grown, enabling formal bank credit. I'm saying this because we can aspire to an India that contributes 25 per cent to world trade, 25 per cent of global trade emanates from India.

India Expected to Achieve Around 7% Growth in FY26

NEW DELHI

The Indian economy is expected to record around 7 per cent growth in the current fiscal, slightly higher than 6.6 per cent projected by the IMF in October, said Gita Gopinath, former chief economist of the Washington-based International Monetary Fund.

Gopinath said that the IMF made its projection for India's growth before the National Statistical Office (NSO) came out with its July-September quarter growth rate of 8.2 per cent.

"I would say that the IMF number (India's growth projection) was 6.6 per cent that came out in October. But their forecast for the second quarter of the current fiscal, in terms of what the growth would be, was much lower than what it turned out to be at over 8 per cent.

"Just doing math, I would expect that India's GDP growth would go up close to 7 per cent," she said.

Earlier this month, the Reserve Bank of India raised the GDP growth projection to 7.3 per cent for the current fiscal from its earlier estimate of 6.8 per cent, following robust economic performance in the July-September quarter.

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) registered a six-quarter high growth of 8.2 per cent in Q2 of 2025-26, underpinned by resilient domestic demand amidst global trade and policy uncertainties.

GCCs in India to account for 35-40 pc of total office demand

MUMBAI

Global Capability Centres (GCCs) are likely to account for 35–40 per cent of total office demand in 2025, and they made up more than 55 per cent of large office deals in the first nine months of CY25, a report said on Wednesday.

The report from CBRE South Asia Private Limited said that resilient demand fundamentals underpinned another record year for office leasing, with gross leasing expected to surpass 80 million sq. ft. in 2025. Around 60 million sq. ft. of gross leasing was recorded between January and September the highest first nine month total on record. The firm forecasted that resilient

demand fundamentals are expected to support sustained leasing momentum in 2026, led by portfolio expansion, workplace reconfiguration, and a continued shift toward premium, future-ready assets.

There is a growing focus on sustainability among occupiers with the majority of tenants having already defined their ESG goals, the report noted.

During the year, occupiers continued to invest in collaborative and innovation-focussed workspaces, fuelling the demand for high-quality, tech-enabled, and experience-driven environments.

Around 84 per cent of new supply delivered in the period was green certified and 77 per cent of leasing occurred in such projects. Sectorally, office space leasing remained broad-based, led by technology firms and supported by flex operators, BFSI, engineering and manufacturing. Further, the Industrial & Logistics (I&L) leasing recorded steady growth, led by third party logistics (3PL) players and e commerce firms, with Delhi NCR, Bengaluru and Hyderabad together accounting for nearly 60 per cent of space take up.

MLFF TOLLING REVOLUTION

Nationwide MLFF Tolling and AI Highway Management to Eliminate Toll Delays by 2026

NEW DELHI

The nationwide implementation of the multi-lane free flow (MLFF) tolling system along with AI-powered highway management is likely to be completed by the end of 2026, a move expected to virtually eliminate waiting time at toll plazas across India. This information was shared with Parliament on Wednesday by Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari during Question Hour in the Rajya Sabha.

Responding to a query, the minister said the introduction of MLFF technology will mark a major transformation in highway travel, enabling vehicles to pass through toll points at speeds of up to 80 km per hour without stopping. Unlike the current system, which still requires vehicles to slow down or halt briefly even with FASTag, the MLFF system will allow uninterrupted movement, significantly improving traffic flow and commuter experience.

Our goal is to bring waiting time down to zero minutes, Gadkari told the House. He explained that the system will rely on advanced technology, including artificial intelligence-based number plate recognition, satellite tracking and integration with FASTag

infrastructure, to automatically identify vehicles and deduct toll charges. According to the minister, the system will be fully deployed across national highways by 2026.

Gadkari emphasised that once operational, the MLFF system will help prevent toll revenue leakage, improve transparency and ensure smoother traffic movement. The technology-driven approach is also expected to reduce travel time, lower fuel consumption and cut vehicular emissions caused by idling and congestion at toll plazas.

Replying to supplementary questions, the minister highlighted that AI will be at the core of the new tolling mechanism. He said commuters will no longer have to wait at toll booths, which would not only enhance convenience but also lead to significant fuel savings.

Increasing Space Junk: A Growing Concern for Earth's Orbit

The night sky has long captivated humanity with its twinkling stars and celestial wonders, but a hidden threat lurks in the darkness above us. Space junk, also known as orbital debris, is accumulating at an alarming rate, creating a mounting crisis that threatens our ability to safely operate satellites, conduct space missions, and maintain crucial infrastructure that modern society depends upon. As we venture further into the space age, the problem of orbital debris has transformed from a minor nuisance into one of the most pressing challenges facing the space industry and humanity's future in space.

THE CAUSES BEHIND THE ACCUMULATION

Several factors contribute to the relentless growth of space junk. The increasing commercialization of space has led to a surge in satellite launches, with companies deploying massive constellations of small satellites for communications, Earth observation, and internet services. SpaceX's Starlink constellation alone plans to deploy tens of thousands of satellites, while other companies pursue similar ambitious projects. While these satellites provide valuable services, they also add to the crowded orbital environment.

Accidental collisions and deliberate destructive events have created massive clouds of debris. The 2009 collision between the operational Iridium 33 satellite and the defunct Russian Cosmos 2251 satellite generated over 2,000 trackable fragments and countless smaller pieces. Anti-satellite weapon tests have proven equally devastating. China's 2007 test, which destroyed one of its own weather satellites, created more than 3,000 pieces of trackable debris that will remain in orbit for decades or even centuries.

Explosions of aging satellites and rocket stages also contribute significantly to the debris population.

Old spacecraft often contain residual fuel or pressurized components that can explode years after their missions end, scattering debris across wide orbital regions.

THE GROWING PROBLEM OF ORBITAL DEBRIS

Space junk encompasses any human-made object orbiting Earth that no longer serves a useful purpose. This includes defunct satellites, spent rocket stages, fragments from satellite collisions, paint flecks, and even tools accidentally dropped by astronauts during spacewalks.

What makes this debris particularly dangerous is not just its quantity, but its velocity.

Objects in low Earth orbit travel at approximately 28,000 kilometers per hour, meaning even a tiny piece of debris the size of a marble possesses enough kinetic energy to damage or destroy an operational spacecraft.

Currently, space-tracking networks monitor approximately 36,000 pieces of debris larger than 10 centimeters in diameter.

However, experts estimate that there are over 130 million pieces of debris smaller than one centimeter, and around one million pieces between one and ten centimeters. These smaller fragments are largely untrackable but remain extremely hazardous.

The sheer volume of debris has grown exponentially since the space age began in 1957, with the problem accelerating dramatically in recent decades.

The Kessler Syndrome: A Cascade of Destruction

The most alarming aspect of space debris is the potential for a catastrophic chain reaction known as Kessler Syndrome, named after NASA scientist Donald Kessler who first described the phenomenon in 1978. This scenario occurs when the density of objects in orbit reaches a critical threshold where collisions between objects create additional debris, which in turn causes more collisions in an unstoppable cascade effect.

If Kessler Syndrome were to occur, certain orbital regions could become completely unusable for generations. This would not merely be an inconvenience but a disaster with profound implications for modern civilization. The loss of satellite capabilities would cripple GPS navigation systems, weather forecasting, telecommunications.

Real-World Consequences and Near Misses

The threat posed by space junk is not merely theoretical. The International Space Station regularly performs collision avoidance maneuvers to dodge debris, with astronauts occasionally taking shelter in evacuation vehicles when potential impacts cannot be avoided. In 2021, the ISS crew was awakened by alarms and had to shelter in place when a debris field from a Russian anti-satellite test passed dangerously close to the station.

Satellites face constant bombardment from smaller debris particles. Solar panels and optical systems suffer degradation from impacts with paint flecks and tiny fragments. The Hubble Space Telescope, despite orbiting in a relatively clean region of space, shows pockmarks from micrometeorite and debris impacts on its surfaces.

Mitigation Strategies and Current Efforts

Recognizing the severity of the space junk problem, the international space community has developed guidelines and technologies aimed at mitigating debris creation. The Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee, comprising major space agencies worldwide, has established guidelines for spacecraft design and mission planning to minimize debris generation.

One key principle is the 25-year rule, which requires that satellites and rocket stages in low Earth orbit either deorbit or move to a graveyard orbit within 25 years after the end of their operational lives. Many modern satellites are now equipped with propulsion systems specifically designed to execute end-of-life deorbit maneuvers, ensuring they burn up in Earth's atmosphere rather than becoming long-term debris. Rocket stages are being redesigned to avoid creating debris. Venting residual propellants, passivating batteries, and designing stages that naturally decay from orbit more quickly are becoming standard practices. Some launch providers have developed technologies to deorbit upper stages immediately after satellite deployment rather than leaving them in orbit. Improved tracking capabilities help satellite operators avoid potential collisions. The U.S. Space Surveillance Network and similar systems operated by other nations track thousands of objects and provide collision warnings when spacecraft and debris trajectories intersect. Advanced radar and optical systems are being deployed to detect and track smaller debris objects, improving our understanding of the orbital environment.

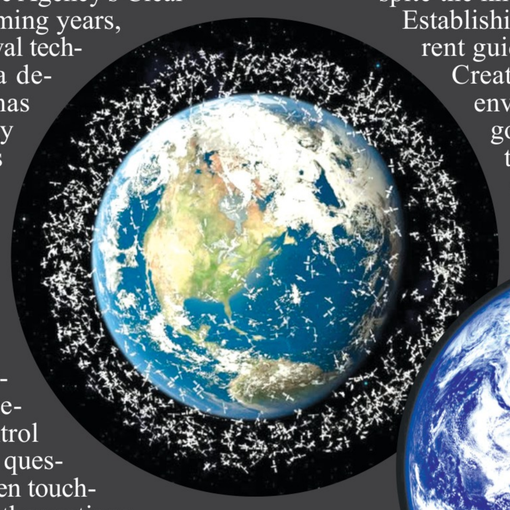
TACKLING THE SPACE JUNK THREAT

The growing danger of space junk has pushed global space agencies to act. International guidelines now focus on reducing debris during and after missions. A key rule requires satellites and rocket stages in low Earth orbit to leave orbit within 25 years of retirement. New satellites use built-in propulsion to safely burn up in Earth's atmosphere. Rocket stages are redesigned to prevent explosions and decay faster. Launch providers are also deorbiting upper stages immediately. Better tracking systems help operators avoid collisions, making Earth's orbit safer for future missions.

Active Debris Removal: The Next Frontier

While prevention is crucial, many experts agree that active debris removal will be necessary to address the existing debris population. Several innovative approaches are under development. These include spacecraft equipped with robotic arms or nets to capture defunct satellites, harpoon systems to snag tumbling objects, and even laser systems that could alter debris trajectories or ablate material to accelerate orbital decay. The European Space Agency's ClearSpace-1 mission, scheduled for the coming years, aims to demonstrate active debris removal technology by capturing and deorbiting a defunct satellite. Japan's space agency has tested electromagnetic tether technology designed to slow down debris objects and cause them to reenter the atmosphere.

These pioneering missions could pave the way for commercial debris removal services. However, active debris removal faces significant technical, legal, and economic challenges. Capturing tumbling, uncooperative objects traveling at orbital velocities requires sophisticated guidance and control systems. International space law raises questions about sovereignty and liability when touching or removing objects belonging to other nations.



INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND POLICY CHALLENGES

Addressing space debris requires unprecedented international cooperation. Space is a global common
s, and debris created by one nation affects all spacefaring countries. However, coordinating policies and enforcement mechanisms across sovereign nations presents formidable challenges.
Some countries prioritize national security concerns over debris mitigation, as evidenced by continued anti-satellite weapon testing despite the known debris consequences.

Establishing binding international regulations remains elusive. Current guidelines are voluntary and lack enforcement mechanisms. Creating a framework similar to international maritime law or environmental treaties for space would require complex negotiations and political will that has so far proven difficult to muster. Questions of verification, compliance, and consequences for violations must be addressed.

The commercial space industry's rapid growth adds another layer of complexity.

Private companies launching satellite constellations must balance profit motives with responsible space stewardship. Regulatory frameworks struggle to keep pace with the accelerating commercialization of space, leaving gaps in oversight and accountability.

The Path Forward

The space junk crisis demands urgent action. The window for preventing Kessler Syndrome may be closing, and the consequences of inaction grow more severe with each passing year. A multi-faceted approach combining prevention, tracking improvements, active removal, and international cooperation offers the best path forward.

Continued innovation in satellite design, propulsion systems, and materials science can help create spacecraft that minimize debris creation and facilitate end-of-life disposal. Investment in debris tracking and characterization systems will improve our understanding of the orbital environment and enable better collision avoidance. Supporting active debris removal technology development could provide the tools needed to clean up the most dangerous existing debris.

Perhaps most importantly, the international community must recognize space debris as a shared challenge requiring collective action. Just as humanity came together to address the ozone layer depletion and other global environmental threats, addressing space junk will require setting aside narrow interests in favor of preserving space for future generations. The increasing accumulation of space junk represents more than a technical challenge. It is a test of humanity's ability to act responsibly as we expand beyond Earth. Our success or failure in addressing orbital debris will determine whether space remains accessible for scientific discovery, technological innovation, and the countless benefits satellites provide to life on Earth. The time to act is now, before the problem spirals beyond our ability to control it.

KNICKS CLAIM NBA CUP WITH STUNNING RALLY

Anunoby scores 28, Brunson MVP as Knicks rally late, secure thrilling victory

LAS VEGAS

The New York Knicks finally have a reason to celebrate after decades, the team captured the NBA Cup by defeating the San Antonio Spurs 124-113 in a thrilling showdown.

OG Anunoby led the charge with 28 points, while Jalen Brunson added 25, earning the tournament's Most Valuable Player award. The Knicks overcame a late deficit, turning a tight game into a memorable victory. "This is great and we're going to enjoy this," Brunson said. "But once we leave tomorrow, we're moving on."

Coach Mike Brown praised his team's resilience. "Every game counts in a single-elimination tournament," he said. "Success builds confidence for everyone in the organization." Karl-Anthony Towns contributed 16 points and 11 rebounds despite dealing with a calf injury, exiting briefly in the third quarter but returning later to help seal the win.

The Spurs were led by Dylan Harper, who scored 21 points, Victor Wembanyama with 18, and De'Aaron Fox with 16. Wembanyama left the postgame press conference early, citing a personal loss. Despite their effort, San Antonio could not stop New York's dominance inside the paint. Mitchell Robinson pulled down 15 rebounds, 10 on offense, giving the Knicks a 56-44 points-in-the-paint advantage.

A key 13-1 run late in the third quarter allowed New York to take a 100-95 lead, a margin they never gave up. Beyond glory, each Knicks player earned an extra $318,560 for winning, bringing the total prize to $530,933.

While this victory doesn't affect regular season standings, both teams remain atop their divisions at 18-7. For the Knicks, it's a strong sign of hope for the Eastern Conference and perhaps, a glimpse of championship glory ahead.

FIFA cuts World Cup tickets after backlash

GENEVA

FIFA has lowered some World Cup ticket prices after fans around the world expressed outrage. Supporters can now get seats for as little as $60, instead of paying up to $4,185 for the final.

The decision, announced by FIFA President Gianni Infantino, targets loyal fans traveling to see their national teams. Tickets in this new "Supporter Entry Tier" will go to the teams' national federations, which decide how to distribute them. Each team could get between 400 and 750 of the $60 seats per match.

FIFA operates across 16 host cities in North America, including 11 NFL stadiums in the United States, plus venues in Canada and Mexico. Officials said the lower prices are meant to help traveling fans follow their teams. However, fan group Football Supporters Europe called the move a "tactic to appease global criticism" and criticized FIFA for acting without proper consultation.

FIFA will use 16 North American cities, including 11 U.S. NFL stadiums, offering lower prices, but critics say it appeases criticism without fan consultation

This World Cup will be the first to feature 48 teams, up from 32, and is expected to generate at least $10 billion for FIFA. Despite criticism over high prices, the organization said it has already received over 20 million ticket requests.

Fans had reacted angrily last week after seeing initial prices, which ranged from $140 to $265 for group-stage games, leaving many loyal supporters with no access to affordable tickets. Other issues, including fees on ticket resale platforms and limited access for fans with disabilities, have also drawn concern.

FIFA said it will waive administrative fees for refunds after the July 19 final, signaling a partial response to fan pressure. Critics argue that true inclusion and fair pricing require more concrete action, not just announcements.

The World Cup in North America promises excitement, but for many fans, affordability remains a top concern.

Coe frustrated as dopers evade legal punishment

LONDON

World Athletics President Sebastian Coe expressed frustration over the legal hurdles that prevent authorities from stripping banned athletes of world records, highlighting the limits of anti-doping enforcement.

Kenyan marathoner Ruth Chepngetich's astonishing two hours, nine minutes and 56 seconds performance in Chicago last October remains the legal world record, even though she received a three-year doping ban earlier this year. Only results after March have been voided, leaving her record intact.

"I share your frustration, but I'm not a lawyer," Coe told journalists. "Legal challenges mean the burden of proof must be a positive test at the time of the performance. Without that, it's extremely difficult to act."

The Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) continues to investigate Chepngetich for other possible violations, while Coe emphasized the importance of smarter testing. "We have to focus on intelligent testing, using AI to allocate resources where it matters most," he said.

High-profile suspensions in 2025 also included American sprinters Marvin Bracy, Erriyon Knighton, and Fred Kerley. AIU chairman David Howman warned that elite dopers are evading detection, hurting the credibility of anti-doping efforts.

Despite the challenges, Coe highlighted the sport's growth. This year's World Championships in Tokyo saw 84 nations reach a final, up from 47 in 1991, showcasing emerging talent across disciplines.

Looking ahead, Coe promoted the inaugural Ultimate Championships in Budapest next September, a one-week-end event featuring the world's best athletes competing for a historic $10 million prize.

MacKinnon powers Avalanche past struggling Kraken

SEATTLE

Nathan MacKinnon led the Colorado Avalanche to a 5-3 win over the Seattle Kraken, scoring twice and adding an assist to extend his NHL-leading goal total to 28 this season.

MacKinnon's performance stretched his point streak to six games, helping the Avalanche secure their third straight victory and earn points in 24 of their last 25 contests. Colorado, with the league's best record, continues to look like a dominant force.

Other Avalanche scorers included Artturi Lehkonen, Samuel Girard, and Brock Nelson. Goalie Mackenzie Blackwood stopped 34 shots to backstop the team.

Seattle's offense came from Chandler Stephenson, Shane Wright, and Jordan Eberle, but the Kraken continue to struggle, losing nine of their last ten games. Philipp Grubauer made 33 saves in a losing effort.

The Kraken appeared to have momentum in the second period, scoring three goals to take a 3-2 lead heading into the third. MacKinnon tied the game early in the final period with a powerful one-timer from the right circle. Less than a minute after a missed Kraken penalty shot, Brock Nelson scored the go-ahead goal. MacKinnon sealed the victory with an empty-net goal in the closing minute.

Lehkonen opened the scoring midway through the first period by deflecting a shot past Grubauer. Despite a valiant effort, the Kraken couldn't overcome Colorado's firepower down the stretch.

The Avalanche will host the Winnipeg Jets on Friday, while Seattle heads to Calgary on Thursday, hoping to snap their losing skid.

MacKinnon's star power and Colorado's consistent play continue to make the Avalanche one of the NHL's most dangerous teams this season.

Three Russian lugers barred from Lake Placid

LAKE PLACID

Three Russian athletes were barred from competing in this weekend's World Cup luge event in Lake Placid due to concerns about their neutrality, the International Luge Federation (FIL) announced.

Alexsandr Gorbatsevich, Sofiia Mazur, and Kseniia Shamova had been seeking World Cup points to improve their chances of qualifying for the 2026 Milan Cortina Olympics. The FIL executive board made the decision after reviewing "new evidence" in consultation with the International Olympic Committee, though the federation did not disclose the specifics.

A person familiar with the situation said the evidence raised questions about the athletes' neutrality regarding Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. The individual spoke on condition of anonymity because the information has not been publicly released. Neutrality is a key factor for Russian athletes who hope to compete in international events. Sports federations are preparing to allow Russian competitors to race only after independent reviews confirm they have not publicly supported the war or have ties to Russia's military or related organizations. Other Russian sliders — Matvei Perestoronin, Pavel Repilov, and Daria Olesik — remain eligible and are expected to compete in Lake Placid.

Shiffrin dominates Slalom with record margin

COURCHEVEL

Mikaela Shiffrin is rewriting the record books this Olympic season. The American ski star continues to dominate slalom races, winning by an average of more than 1.5 seconds — a huge margin in competitive skiing.

Shiffrin claimed her 105th World Cup victory, extending her record after several top rivals failed to finish during the night race. She crossed the finish line 1.55 seconds ahead of Switzerland's Camille Rast and 1.71 seconds ahead of Germany's Emma Aicher.

This season, Shiffrin has won the first four slaloms and five in a row including last season's final race. Her victories in Levi, Finland; Gurgl, Austria; and Copper Mountain, Colorado, all featured margins exceeding a full second, with three over 1.5 seconds — averaging 1.5025 seconds this season. "I'm just pushing. I'm not asking questions. Sometimes you just got to take it and roll with it," Shiffrin said.

Rivals struggled on the challenging course. Germany's Lena Duerr went off course, while Lara Colturi of Albania straddled a gate early, ending her podium streak. Wendy Holdener suffered a scary tumble but still finished seventh. Zrinka Ljutic and Olympic silver medalist Katharina Liensberger both failed to finish midway down.

Austria's Katharina Truppe finished fourth, and American Paula Moltzan moved from ninth to fifth after a strong second run. Shiffrin's 68th World Cup slalom win adds to her Olympic golds in Sochi 2014 and Pyeongchang 2018.

Looking ahead to the February Olympics in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy, Shiffrin will be a favorite for multiple medals. She leads the overall World Cup standings with 558 points, followed by Alice Robinson, Rast, and Aicher. Lindsey Vonn, who won a downhill last week at 41, will return soon for downhill and super-G races.

Shiffrin's dominance shows no sign of slowing as the Olympic season intensifies.

Brazile sparks Arkansas to big win

FAYETTEVILLE

Trevon Brazile scored a career-high 26 points to lead No. 14 Arkansas to a 108-80 victory over Queens, as the Razorbacks cruised to their fourth straight win.

Brazile shot an impressive 9-of-11 from the field, including 5-of-7 from beyond the arc. He also added 18 points in the first half, helping Arkansas take a 24-point lead into halftime. Darius Acuff Jr. contributed 23 points and 10 assists, scoring 16 in the opening 20 minutes.

The Razorbacks shot 60% in the first half and dominated in transition, outscoring Queens 32-14 on fast-break points. Arkansas finished the game 14 of 28 from three-point range, while the Royals managed just 6 of 25.

Queens struggled offensively, with Atlantic Sun preseason player of the year Chris Ashby limited to only two points on 1-of-9 shooting, including 0-for-7 from three-point range. Nasir Mann led the Royals with 16 points.

Four other Arkansas players joined Brazile and Acuff in double figures. Billy Richmond III scored 15 points off the bench, Nick Pringle added 14, Karter Knox had 11, and D.J. Wagner contributed 10.

The Razorbacks have now bounced back strongly after an early-season loss to then-No. 4 Duke on Thanksgiving. Arkansas' balanced scoring and efficient shooting proved too much for Queens, demonstrating why they are ranked among the nation's top teams.

Proteas Women Smash Records to Seal ODI Series Against Ireland

GQEBERHA

South Africa's women's cricket team smashed records to secure their three-match ODI series against Ireland with a commanding 74-run win. Both sides crossed the 300-run mark in a high-scoring contest that thrilled fans.

The Proteas posted 375/6, their highest total in women's 50-over cricket and 13th best globally. Laura Wolvaardt led the charge with a brilliant 124 runs at the top of the order. In-form all-rounder Sune Luus added 114, while former captain Dane van Niekerk contributed 88, marking her first ODI series in over four years.

"It's always great to win a series with a match to spare," van Niekerk said. "The batting was fantastic. Scoring 370 on this wicket is almost like hitting 400. Wolvaardt led the way, and Sune was incredible in every aspect."

Ireland also broke through 300 for only the fifth time in their history, led by Orla Prendergast's 97 and Amy Hunter's 64. Despite the defeat, captain Gaby Lewis praised her team's effort. "The girls battled hard, and Orla deserved a hundred. We're moving in the right direction and want to finish the tour strongly," she said.

In the bowling department, South Africa's Leah Jones shone with three wickets, though van Niekerk noted the need for improvement. "The bowling needs sharpening. Ireland reaching 300 is historic, but it's good cricket for the fans and the game." The high-scoring clash saw a combined total of over 680 runs, highlighting the growing excitement in women's cricket. With the series secured, South Africa now looks ahead to the final match in Johannesburg on Friday, aiming to end the series with a clean sweep

Christensen, Rashford secure Barcelona Copa win

MADRID

Barcelona needed late goals from Andreas Christensen and Marcus Rashford to defeat third-division side Guadalajara 2-0 in the Copa del Rey round of 32. The match was delayed by half an hour due to issues with the stadium's temporary grandstand.

Local authorities initially blocked fan access to the new grandstand at Pedro Escartín Stadium in Guadalajara, near Madrid. Long lines formed outside until police allowed supporters to enter. The stadium's capacity increased from about 6,000 to roughly 8,000 with the addition.

Barcelona dominated possession throughout the match but struggled to create clear scoring chances against their lower-tier opponents. Christensen finally broke the deadlock in the 76th minute with a header from Frenkie De Jong's cross.

The ball deflected off a defender before finding the net.

Guadalajara had several chances to equalize but could not convert.

Rashford sealed the 2-0 victory with a late breakaway goal in the 90th minute, ensuring Barcelona's place in the next round.

Coach Hansi Flick rested several regular starters ahead of Sunday's La Liga match against third-place Villarreal, keeping key players fresh for league competition. Despite the lower-level opposition, the team showed patience and control, waiting for the right moments to strike.

Barcelona now moves on in the Copa del Rey, while Guadalajara can take pride in holding off one of Spain's top clubs for most of the match. The victory boosts Barcelona's confidence as they prepare for upcoming league challenges, with the team aiming to balance cup ambitions with a strong league campaign.

Carey, Khawaja rescue Australia on day one

Khawaja returns, scores 82 for Australia, survives early dropped catch, eventually dismissed by Will Jacks before tea

ADELAIDE

Australia got off to a strong start in the third Ashes Test as wicketkeeper-batter Alex Carey and Usman Khawaja led a fightback at the Adelaide Oval. At stumps on Day 1, the hosts were 326 for 8 after an early batting collapse.

Australia had lost four quick wickets for just 94 runs, but Carey and Khawaja steadied the innings with a 91-run partnership for the fifth wicket. Carey, batting lower down the order, played with composure, hitting crisp boundaries on the leg side to reach 41 by lunch before eventually scoring a brilliant 106. The century marked his third in Test cricket and his first in front of home fans, a moment he dedicated to his late father, who passed away in September.

Khawaja, returning to the team after Steve Smith was ruled out due to a vestibular issue, contributed a well-made 82. He had a lucky reprieve early when Harry Brook dropped a catch at five runs. Khawaja eventually fell to Will Jacks while attempting a sweep just before tea, adding vital runs to Australia's total.

Earlier, openers Jake Weatherald and Travis Head gave Australia a solid start, though both fell cheaply. Marnus Labuschagne also began well but was dismissed alongside Cameron Green by England's pace spearhead Jofra Archer, who finished with figures of 3-29. Other wickets were shared by Carse, Jacks, and Tongue.

Lower down, Mitchell Starc remained unbeaten on 32, providing support to Nathan Lyon as Australia built a respectable total despite England's early breakthroughs. Carey's innings pushed him past Steve Smith as Australia's leading run-scorer in Tests this year, ranking him sixth globally. Australia's fightback set up an exciting contest for Day 2 as England looks to strike early against a resilient home side.

Brief Scores
Australia 326/8 (Alex Carey 106, Usman Khawaja 82; Jofra Archer 3-29) vs England

Sridhar joins SL Cricket team coaching staff

COLOMBO

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) has named R. Sridhar as the new fielding coach for the men's national cricket team, a role he will hold until the ICC Men's T20 World Cup concludes on March 10, 2026.

Sridhar, a BCCI Level 3 certified coach, brings a wealth of international experience. He served as India's fielding coach from 2014 to 2021, guiding the team in over 300 matches, including two ODI and T20 World Cups.

In his new role, Sridhar will focus on improving the team's fielding skills ahead of tours to Pakistan and England, and during preparations for the T20 World Cup.

Speaking on his appointment, Sridhar said, "Sri Lankan players have always shown instinctive brilliance, resilience, and team spirit. My goal is not to impose a system but to create an environment where athleticism, awareness, and pride in the field can grow naturally."

Earlier this year, he led a 10-day specialized fielding camp at Sri Lanka Cricket's National High-Performance Centre. During the camp, he worked with the national team and other squads on drills, skill-focused training, and simulated match situations to mirror real-game conditions.

Sridhar emphasized that fielding improves when players feel connected to the ball, to each other, and to the game moment.

Undefeated Crawford retires after historic boxing career

Crawford, retired as top pound-for-pound fighter, leaves a legacy of skill, resilience, and sportsmanship, hailed as one of his generation's most fearless, technically gifted boxers

OMAHA

Boxing star Terence Crawford announced his retirement, closing the chapter on a historic career that saw him dominate the sport across multiple weight divisions.

The 38-year-old Omaha native leaves the ring undefeated with a perfect record of 42 wins, including 31 by knockout. Crawford captured 18 major world titles across five weight classes, cementing his place as one of boxing's all-time greats. Crawford's final victory came in September when he defeated Mexican legend Canelo Alvarez to become the undisputed super middleweight world champion. That win made him the first boxer in modern history to hold undisputed titles in three divisions—light welterweight, welterweight, and super middleweight.

"I'm stepping away from competition, not because I'm done fighting, but because I've won a different kind of battle—the one where you walk away on your own terms," Crawford said in a video posted on YouTube.

In a post on X, Crawford wrote: "Walking away as a great with nothing else left to prove. I gave this sport every breath I had. Every scar, every triumph, every ounce of my heart. I've made peace with what's next. And now, it's time. Thank you."

Crawford, who was ranked the No. 1 pound-for-pound fighter at the time of his retirement, leaves behind a legacy of skill, resilience, and sportsmanship. Fans and fellow athletes alike praised his achievements, calling him one of the most technically gifted and fearless boxers of his generation.

Though he will no longer compete professionally, Crawford emphasized that this is not a farewell, but the start of a new journey beyond the ring. Boxing now celebrates a champion who ended his career at the very peak of the sport.

Mohun Bagan hit with AFC ban, USD 100,729 fine

KOLKATA

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has handed Mohun Bagan Super Giant a one-season ban from continental competitions and imposed a fine of USD 100,729 (approximately ₹91 lakh) for withdrawing from the 2025–26 AFC Champions League Two. The sanction followed the club's refusal to travel to Iran for a group-stage fixture against Sepahan SC.

In its order (VVC 20251217DC21), the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee ruled that the reigning Indian Super League champions violated Article 5 of the competition regulations, which deals with withdrawal after the group stage has begun. The decision has come at a challenging time for Indian football, which is already facing uncertainty due to delays and instability in the domestic season calendar.

Caruana reflects on Gukesh's challenging 2025 year

NEW DELHI

World No. 3 Fabiano Caruana recently shared his thoughts on reigning world champion D Gukesh, calling 2025 a "tough year" for the 19-year-old Indian chess prodigy. Caruana said Gukesh is "not the clear No. 1 in the world right now," but stressed that such fluctuations are normal for a champion.

Gukesh stunned the chess world last December by defeating Ding Liren, becoming the youngest-ever world champion. Since then, expectations have soared, and opponents have been extra motivated to beat him.

This year, Gukesh has faced inconsistency. While representing PBG Alaskan Knights at the Global Chess League, he drew against Hikaru Nakamura on the first day, reflecting a year with few tournament wins. He came close at the Tata Masters in Wijk aan Zee but lost the final tie-breaker to fellow Indian grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa.

Caruana highlighted that, despite the challenges, Gukesh is still performing at a top level, unlike Ding Liren during his weaker period. "Maybe next year will be better. I wouldn't be surprised if he comes into very good shape next year," Caruana said.

Looking ahead, Caruana has secured his spot for the Candidates, where he could face Gukesh again. Praggnanandhaa is also considered a strong contender, with Caruana noting he has a "realistic chance" at the title.

Andhra Pradesh rewards star cricketer Shree Charani

AMARAVATI

The Andhra Pradesh government has honored woman cricketer Shree Charani with a cash reward of Rs 2.5 crore for her outstanding performance at the ICC Women's One Day World Cup. The award was personally handed over by Education and IT Minister Nara Lokesh at his Undavalli residence.

A native of Kadapa district, Shree Charani has quickly become one of India's brightest stars in international women's cricket. She played a key role in India's historic World Cup win, taking 14 wickets during the tournament and helping the team secure its first-ever ICC Women's Cricket World Cup title on November 2 by defeating South Africa by 52 runs.

Along with the cash prize, the state government has offered her a 500-square-yard residential plot in Visakhapatnam. Shree Charani has also been assured a Group-I level government job after completing her degree, with formal orders already issued.

The ceremony was attended by Transport and Youth & Sports Minister Mandipalli Ramprasad Reddy, Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh Chairman Animini Ravinayudu, Special Chief Secretary (Sports) Ajay Jain, and other senior officials.

This recognition reflects the state's commitment to promoting sporting excellence and encouraging young women to pursue careers in sports with confidence. Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu had earlier announced the incentives after meeting the young cricketer. Shree Charani, a left-arm spinner, made her World Cup debut in April and quickly made an impact on the global stage. Her dedication and talent have inspired many, and Andhra Pradesh's generous rewards celebrate not only her individual success but also the rise of women's cricket in India.

CSK features wicketkeepers from every decade

NEW DELHI

Former India cricketer Abhinav Mukund has spotted an unusual and interesting trend in Chennai Super Kings' (CSK) squad for IPL 2026. The five-time champions now have one wicketkeeper from every decade of life: teens, 20s, 30s, and 40s.

CSK's squad includes four wicketkeepers: 19-year-old Kartik Sharma, Urvil Patel in his 20s, Sanju Samson in his 30s, and veteran MS Dhoni in his 40s.

The team, which assembled a 25-member squad at the IPL auction held at Abu Dhabi's Etihad Arena, focused heavily on youth. Key picks included Prashant Veer from Uttar Pradesh and Kartik Sharma of Rajasthan, both bought for Rs. 14.20 crores, making them the joint-costliest uncapped players in IPL history.

Mukund described CSK's approach as a "tectonic shift" and called the squad "a very different side." He said, "Earlier, CSK's retentions were based on past success. Now, everything is out of the window. For 2026, it's almost like a 30 per cent investment in wicketkeepers."

He added that the new squad signals a complete reset for the franchise. "Every player coming in now is experiencing this environment for the first time. This doesn't look like the CSK team we're used to seeing. There are no traditional overseas openers or tall fast bowlers from Australia or South Africa. It's a very different CSK side.

Wayne Madsen named Italy T20 World captain

ROME

Wayne Madsen will lead Italy in their first-ever ICC Men's T20 World Cup next year, the Italian Cricket Federation confirmed. He replaces Joe Burns, who will not be part of the squad for the historic tournament.

Burns, who captained Italy during the qualifying campaign in the Netherlands this July, helped secure the nation's first-ever spot at a global cricket tournament. He also represented Italy in the 2024 competitions in Rome and Uganda. The Federation expressed gratitude for his contribution on and off the field.

The Federation said Madsen was chosen after internal evaluations highlighted him as the "most suitable choice" to lead the team. The official squad for the T20 World Cup has yet to be announced.

Italy opens its World Cup campaign against Bangladesh in Kolkata on February 9. They will also face England, West Indies, and Nepal in Group C.

Before the tournament, Italy will play a historic three-match T20I series against Ireland in Dubai starting January 23. This will be the first time Italy competes in a bilateral series against an ICC Full Member nation, offering both teams a chance to prepare for the World Cup.

The move marks a new chapter for Italian cricket, as the team sets its sights on making a mark on the global stage.

Chakaravarthy reaches career-best T20I rating

DUBAI

India spinner Varun Chakaravarthy reached a career-high rating of 818 points to extend his lead atop the T20I bowling rankings after his third consecutive two-wicket haul in the ongoing five-match series against South Africa.

Chakaravarthy picked up two wickets in each of the past two T20Is, boosting his rating by 36 points and giving him a 119-point advantage over second-placed New Zealand seamer Jacob Duffy, who has 699 points. The spinner's consistent performances have cemented his status as the world's top T20 bowler.

Left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh also moved up four places to 16th following his Player of the Match display in the series' third game. South Africa made gains as well, with Marco Jansen rising 14 spots to 25th, Lungi Ngidi moving up 11 places to 44th, and Ottneil Baartman breaking into the top 100 at 68th.

On the batting front, young India opener Abhishek Sharma maintains his top spot, while Tilak Varma jumped to fourth, giving India two players firmly inside the T20I top five ahead of the 2026 World Cup. South Africa's Aiden Markram (29th) and Quinton de Kock (43rd) also climbed the rankings after solid performances.

In the all-rounder rankings, Pakistan's Saim Ayub continues to lead despite limited recent action. India's Hardik Pandya (4th), Axar Patel (9th), and Shivam Dube (16th) are also among the top performers.

Meanwhile, in Tests, New Zealand's Devon Conway rose seven spots to 34th in batting, while Duffy climbed 15 places to 48th among bowlers. Australia's Mitchell Starc reached a career-best second place in the Test bowling rankings following Matt Henry's absence.

With both Indian batters and bowlers performing strongly, the team looks well-prepared ahead of upcoming international challenges.

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